10 June 1983 65p IR 94p US$1.50 By Air

New Statesman

Rise of the Tory Militant:

Racism unleashed

- Keith Middlemas: supremacy of the Party
- Fay Weldon's diary
- David Edgar: our worst nightmares

Plus:
Duncan Campbell on a nuclear convoy

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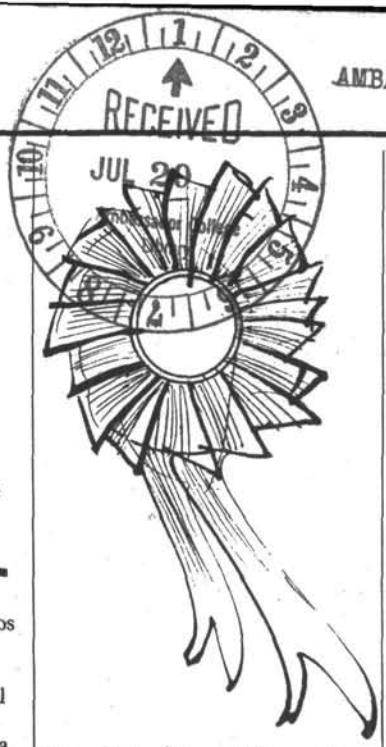

New Statesman

New Statesman
14-16 Farringdon Lane
London EC1R 3AU
Tel: 01-253 2001
Editorial: 01-253 2003
Telex: 28449
Cables: Newstat, London EC1
©1983 Statesman & Nation Publishing Company Ltd and contributors
Published and distributed by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Company Ltd

Subscriptions: Lesley Bridgmount, Cecilia Papadopoulos
Circulation: Liz Cooper, Tim Freeman
Display advertisements: Michael Roberts 01-253 2001
Classified advertisements: Laura Berryman, Stephen Mitchell 01-251 5487

Subscription Rates
Surface mail:
UK £29, Overseas £32
Air mail:
Europe £36, Middle East £39, Africa, India, South America £40, Australasia, Far East £45, USA $79, Canada $92

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New Statesman Vol 105 No 2725 10 June 1983

A watershed election

This Führer approach to an election in which a large part of the electorate had hoped to have the opportunity of listening to a serious argument of principle and exposition of programmes has done great damage to British institutions: it has increased cynicism; it has damaged the idea of reason in national affairs.

THESE WORDS were written by Kingsley Martin in the *New Statesman* in the closing stages of a general election campaign. The date was July 1945, when the press and the experts were expecting Churchill to win. The comment, though, applies with full force to the election campaign that is now drawing to a close. It would be wonderful to suppose that the media and the experts might be proved as wrong on Thursday as they were in 1945.

Labour will certainly do better than the latest polls seem to be indicating. The Prime Minister's manic presentation is grating even on some traditional Tory supporters. But it would be foolish to suppose that anything less than a political earthquake will now stop her. This election has been a nightmare for those on the Left who can see clearly what a second Thatcher term will mean to this country. It has been a nightmare in the way that the campaign has had an existence of its own (in which the Tories were doing well and Labour failing to make progress) that was wholly unrelated to the real (and next week's waking) world.

The refusal of Mrs Thatcher to discuss issues and the failure of the opposition parties to engage the electorate in a debate about issues over the past month will mark this election as having done more damage to the proper democratic process than any post-war election in this country. There has been less public involvement than in any election since the war and not without reason, since the politicians did not seem to be taking the electorate seriously. In this television has played its part, for whether you like it or not modern mass political communication takes place on television. Television chose to present this election as one of personalities – with balanced setpiece performances by the parties' leaders, rather than with analysis of programmes and policies. But the media cannot and should not be blamed for what has essentially been a political failure.

The Liberal-SDP Alliance has not even tried in this election to present 'serious argument of principle and exposition of programmes' for the simple reason that it has none worthy of the name. The Liberal Party's opposition to cruise missiles has been smothered by the Alliance leadership. The SDP has shown itself in its true colours as the entrenched vested interests of the professional middle classes on the march, having come together in a new party because they felt excluded by the two main parties. With the single exception of proportional representation (a policy which in any case came to the Alliance manifesto from the Liberal side) the self-styled radical centre has offered nothing by way of a basis for mass political support.

The Labour Party has tried hard enough to engage the electorate seriously. It has undoubtedly suffered from the legacy of the bitter internal fighting of the past four years. In one or two areas – notably over defence and the Common Market – it has been harmed by the obvious lack of party unity. But over the vast range of the rest of the manifesto – economic policy, employment, industry, education, social services, transport, civil rights – Labour has put forward a coherent alternative to the comprehensive social and economic failures of the present government. It is a programme that would properly serve the interests of the overwhelming majority of the people of this country and it deserves wholehearted support on Thursday.

BY CONTRAST the electorate need be under no illusion about what a vote for Thatcher on Thursday would mean for this country over the next five years. The true nature of the Tory Party that Mrs Thatcher has created since she became its leader in 1975 was captured by the cameras at the Tory Youth rally at Wembley. Kenny Everett may have been joking from the platform, but the instinctive roars of approval from the floor were the confident voice of the new Tory Party. It is a party which pursues the cold war, from an ever more unstable pile of nuclear weaponry, with a glib disregard for the consequences. It may seem fanciful exaggeration to see parallels between what is happening to British democracy now and what happened in Germany in the 1920s and early 1930s. But it will not seem fanciful in four or five years' time if Mrs Thatcher gets her landslide.

The built-in institutional safeguards in our system against extremism of the Right have been under assault by the Prime Minister even in her first term, when she was by no means in total control of her political and administrative machine. There is a thin line between crusading Tory reaction and fascism. The neo-Right is poised to cross it in this country. Of course, its form would be British and different from models in other countries. But no one can any longer be unclear about the kind of political forces that Mrs Thatcher has chosen to encourage.

The Tories *do* have a 'hidden agenda' for the next Parliament. It is inherent in many of the points on the published agenda. First, it is clear that – despite all the evidence that Thatcherite economic and budgetary policy has been a national catastrophe – the next Tory government would continue it. That policy can only lead to a further serious assault on the social services, on education and on the National Health Service, starting this autumn.

Secondly, as unemployment continues to rise (by deliberate government choice) so the demands for tougher 'law and order' policies as agents of social control will mount. The symbol of this is the declared intention to bring back the Police Bill, which is the biggest single attack on individual liberty since the war. But it shows equally in the whole tenor of the Thatcherite approach to social questions, including her enthusiastic support for the reintroduction of capital punishment.

Despite eerie similarities with the 1930s, however, this Tory leadership depends on a populist rhetoric which proclaims ideals that must end in national destruction. Unlike Tory leaders of the 1930s, Thatcher struts on her stage crying out her willingness to use a nuclear arsenal and demanding we believe that wars can somehow make Britain, with Empire and manufacturing supremacy irretrievably gone, 'Great' again. It would be farcical were it not terrifying.

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Computers, conspiracies and the KGB

THE DAILY MAIL applied its distinct brand of journalism last week to show its readers the hidden side of the implacable war between East and West.

In a front page scoop – 'KGB Smuggle Plot Smashed' – it revealed last Wednesday how British Customs Officers had seized computers illegally bound for the USSR 'as part of a crackdown against KGB operations to steal British and US scientific achievements and convert knowhow to Russia's military and commercial advantage.'

The story was news to HM Customs at Dover. Sources inside the service say far from knowingly foiling a KGB plot they found the cargo by accident because it lacked the necessary export licence. It seems that the computers in question were in fact destined for a research institute in Bulgaria. 'This was really just a lucky find, not part of any special operation' said one customs officer.

In the *Daily Mail's* presentation, however, 'the Dover interception coincides with a Williamsburg summit promise to President Reagan from Mrs Margaret Thatcher of total backing for a US operation codenamed "Exodus."' The promise that Reagan wants, but which Mrs Thatcher cannot give, is of total backing for his proposed changes to the US Export Administration Act, already the most comprehensive list ever of high-tech goods which the USSR and Warsaw Pact countries may not buy. It reads, says *Fortune* magazine, 'like a Sears catalogue.'

British Customs Officers follow the list drawn up by Cocom, the West's shadowy Co-ordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Control representing NATO members and Japan. It is much shorter and Cocom is anxious to keep it that way. As is Britain; according to the Department of Trade, the UK 'is vigorously defending its existing Customs control for the export of high technology from American efforts to impose its own more tyrannical controls.' Discussions are proceeding in Washington and Paris where Reagan's similar attempt to press European countries to impose an embargo on the Russian gas pipeline foundered. A wider ban on high-tech exports would threaten European jobs.

On Thursday, the *Daily Mail* asserted that the equipment found was for military use. The two old-fashioned PDP 11 computers, made by *Digital Equipment Corporation* of America, are normally (though not exclusively) used for word processing and accounting. 'There's no substantiation for the stories about this equipment having a military application' said a Customs official.

On Saturday, the *Daily Mail* carried an article exposing the KGB orders to 'beg, borrow or steal the West's technology.' The chief writer explaining the KGB's techniques was Brian Freemantle. He is the author of *KGB*, published last year and claiming to be a 'chilling authentic account of the work of the Soviet police.' Yet Freemantle's evidence of how the Soviet Union acquires US technology has not survived examination. In Saturday's article he repeated the claim made in his book that the Soviet consulate in San Francisco was 'strategically placed' close to the Mare Island naval base and 'concentrates' upon Silicon valley.

'Soviet Consul General Aleksandr Chikvaidze was not originally a diplomat: his vocation was that of an engineer' and, claims Freemantle in *KGB*, 'He was once chairman of the Soviet Union's Committee on Science and Technology'. Sources for this story were not scarce: *Newsweek* had printed it on two occasions, NBC had broadcast it, and it was freely quoted by the same Capitol Hill Republican lobbyists who forced Reagan into the dispute over the Siberian gas pipeline.

The story is not true. Chikvaidze has never been chairman of the Soviet Committee on Science and Technology, a position that automatically qualifies the holder to a deputy premiership of the USSR. He was not an engineer but a historian who has had a book published on British foreign policy before the wars. He was First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in London 1971 at the time Sir Alec Douglas Home expelled 90 diplomats and trade officials as spies – yet Chikvaidze was not regarded as a spy or threat, and stayed in London until 1974 when he returned to his home town in Georgia for the top job in publishing. From there he went to San Francisco as Consul in 1978.

As for the 'strategically placed' consulate, it is an office block on the wrong side of one of San Francisco's hills. A former MI5 signals officer inspected aerials and antennae on its roof and said they were good only for television and radio reception. Despite the claimed concentration by the consulate on silicon valley, a two-year campaign – the 'Operation Exodus' for which Thatcher has apparently pledged British support – by US customs, FBI and Federal agencies has failed to catch a single Soviet agent. Three quarters of its seizures of suspect exports have been quietly handed back to the manufacturers because they are believed to have no military application.

Tinker, tailor, historian Chikvaidze

It is true that Warsaw Pact countries wants to catch up on Western developments of microelectronics and that they have used West European businessmen to smuggle equipment out of the USA, and into Eastern Europe. Yet according to *Fortune*, the majority of the American business community is opposed to the rigid clampdown on the free export of high technology to the East. The pressure to maintain or strengthen the restrictions – and find reasons to justify them – comes from the cold war lobby.

Steve Anderson and Paul Walton

Steve Anderson researched the World in Action *programme which first challenged the claims about the San Francisco consulate.*

Dudley still crumbles

A DUDLEY headteacher, who complained of distortion when his school was featured without permission in a NALGO film on spending cuts, has now himself warned the local authority of the dangerous condition of the school.

Charles Harris, head of Mons Hill comprehensive, says in a letter to the director of education: 'The state of decoration generally is appalling and in certain areas downright disgraceful. There are rooms in this school which have not had a lick of paint on them for seventeen years, floors which are dangerous due to the tiles lifting and a general air of neglect is redolent at every turn.'

One of the claims in the NALGO film, made during the Easter school holidays, was that pupils were having to decorate the school themselves. An HM inspectors' report on the school four years ago commented on the 'dinginess' of the place. Harris complains that 'nothing has been done since then'. 'There is no inducement to staff to be enthusiastic about their work or indeed the children in theirs to have to sit amongst such filth and squalor,' he continues.

Harris concludes his letter, dated 18 May: 'In thirty years in the profession I have never been in a school where such an aura of dereliction pervades and there cannot be any avoiding the unwholesomeness of this building'.

The state of educational provision in Tory-controlled Dudley was condemned in a special HM Inspectors' investigation last year. It is now so bad that the vice-chair of Dudley's education committee – who is head of a school in next-door Labour-controlled Sandwell – is alleged to have offered 100 textbooks on permanent loan to any impoverished Dudley school. She is reported to have said that her Sandwell school had more than enough books.

Dudley claims to have increased its education budget for 1983/4 by 6.6 per cent in real terms. But figures in its Rates Report 1983/4 published in April show only a 1.3 per cent rise in net spending without allowing for inflation.

Dudley is held up by the Tories as a model of how local councils can cut public spending.

Rick Rogers

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Thatcher erupts on Belgrano

MRS THATCHER has continued to be misleading about the sinking of the *General Belgrano*. Pressed on the issue at her morning press conference last Friday she said the Argentine cruiser was only six hours away from the ships of the British task force. The suggestion that the *Belgrano* was six hours' sailing time away was actually made by a journalist, who was interrupted by what is now a familiar rage when Mrs Thatcher is questioned about the *Belgrano*. 'Six hours!' she shrieked. '*Only* six hours!'

In fact, all available evidence suggests that the *Belgrano* was at least 14 hours away from the nearest British ships. Information given in Parliament put the *Belgrano* 250-300 nautical miles away from the task force and Argentine military sources confirm that the *Belgrano*'s top speed was 18 knots (18 nautical miles per hour).

Mrs Thatcher's outburst continued: 'Our submarine could have lost the *Belgrano* in those six hours.' As the *Sunday Times* admitted in an article this week attempting to exonerate Mrs Thatcher, the officers of the nuclear submarine *Conqueror* – which had been shadowing the *Belgrano* for 30 hours – were so confident of their ability to stay on the *Belgrano*'s tail that they have rejected what was at one stage the government's explanation for the attack: that the *Belgrano* could have been lost if it had made a dash for the Burdwood Bank shallows.

Meanwhile, Foreign Secretary Francis Pym confirmed in an interview last Thursday with Peter Snow on BBC-1's *Newsnight* the extent of the mistrust that existed between him and Mrs Thatcher at the time of the *Belgrano* sinking. He repeated that he was not consulted over the sinking of the *Belgrano* and that he did not report the Peruvian peace proposals to London until after the sinking. On his arrival in Washington two days before he had said that the attack on the runway at Port Stanley was designed to 'concentrate the minds of the Argentinians on a peaceful settlement', and that there would be no more hostilities while talks went on. There seems to have been the most extraordinary lack of cohesion over the aims of the War Cabinet.

The sinking of the *Belgrano* has become an election issue in the last week of the campaign. Last weekend David Steel and Shirley Williams came out in favour of an inquiry, and the Labour leadership has followed suit (155 Labour backbenchers signed a motion calling for an inquiry four weeks ago on 12 May). And Tam Dalyell, the Labour candidate who first accused Mrs Thatcher of sinking the *Belgrano* for political rather than military reasons, has rushed out a book detailing his allegations this week (*Thatcher's Torpedo*, Cecil Woolf, London, £1.95).

John Rentoul

Inquiry rejects minibuses

LONDON TRANSPORT has rejected a plan to flood London's streets with minibuses (*NS* 25 Feb and 18 March 1983). Associated Minibus Operators (AMOS) wanted to run 500 minibuses on four routes through central London. AMOS was fronted by Anthony Shephard, a former Commissioner for Transport in Hong Kong, who had introduced legalised minibuses in both Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur and who was taken up by Margaret Thatcher's economic adviser, Dr Alan Walters. The proposal was supported by Tory right-wingers and a public inquiry into it was held earlier this year.

But Geoffrey Holden, the inspector who conducted the inquiry, came down against AMOS, in terms so damning that the company will find it very hard to appeal to the Secretary of State for Transport. Holden writes of the AMOS proposals: 'In my view, the disadvantages and dangers to the public are so overwhelmingly greater than any possible advantages that it would be folly to implement the proposals.'

A Tory transport secretary would find it very hard to overturn this conclusion, particularly since the last time David Howell made a similar decision (about a bus service in Cumbria) he was over-ruled by the High Court.

One of the points which told against AMOS was how far the minibuses would travel in a day. The company said that the average speed would be 12 miles per hour. But at one stage Shephard said they would travel 285 miles per day – which meant that each minibus would have to be running for 24 hours a day. The figures were in such disarray that the inquiry was adjourned so that AMOS could come up with a reasonable figure.

When the inquiry resumed AMOS produced a new figure – 160 miles a day. AMOS then said that it had known for some time that the daily mileage would only be 160 miles. The inspector writes: 'I can only conclude that this was due either to incompetence or to a deliberate attempt to mislead me.'

Mick Hamer

A nation of housekeepers

WHAT is the evidence that Tories view women as a nation of housekeepers? They are responsible for the:

- introduction of the 'initial availability test' for women on supplementary benefit, demanding unemployed mothers, but not fathers, prove they have made proper arrangements for their children.
- amending the regulations to women's abortion rights (without being able to get a change in the law through parliament).
- cutting maternity benefit by 5 per cent

and much else besides, detailed in a pamphlet from Rights of Women, in one of few specifically feminist interventions in the election. ■

MISCELLANY

Blue Max

The man who recaptured Port Stanley single-handed, Max Hastings of the London *Standard*, spent the election campaign following Mrs Thatcher around the country and producing some predictably awestruck prose ('I began to feel conscious of listening transfixed to the Prime Minister rather than steering the conversation very successfully towards the tough questions . . .'). Were the Tories grateful? Not a bit of it. 'Max Hastings,' growled one of Mrs T's most senior advisers, 'is the most naive and politically ignorant journalist in Fleet Street.' Oh dear.

Back to work

Talking of the street of shame, we are beginning to worry about the well-being of the *Guardian*. So many of the paper's journalists are standing for Parliament on behalf of the Alliance that there seems to be some difficulty in filling all the paper's pages every day. This, at least, is our explanation for the fact that last Thursday's *Guardian* carried a news story about the Upper Heyford protest on its back page while simultaneously carrying exactly the same article, verbatim, on page four. This happened with another article a few weeks ago. Normal service will be resumed as soon as possible after Thursday night, we trust.

In the news

For the past couple of years the Islington Labour Party, in North London, has had a policy of boycotting the local paper, the *Islington Gazette*. The policy has been strictly enforced, too. Odd, then, to see that last week's *Gazette* printed an interview with leading Militant Peter Taaffe, who lives in Islington. The justification is simple: Taaffe is no longer a member of the Labour Party, having just been expelled by the National Executive, and is therefore free to talk to the press. Aha! But he *is* still a member of the Islington Labour Party, which has refused to accept the expulsion; and the policy of boycotting the *Gazette* comes from Islington rather than the national party. A most elegant paradox; W. S. Gilbert, thou shouldst be living at this hour.

Off yer bike

The Department of the Environment has put up signs all over Hyde Park, London, in order to keep out cyclists. The sign has a red rim, within which is a silhouette of a bicycle with a red slash superimposed on it. We are sorry to inform the DoE that the Department of Transport, which is the official arbiter in these matters, specially disapproves of signs like this: the correct one should show nothing but a bike with a red ring round it. Adding a slash, in the DoT's view, might confuse people. The DoE and the DoT inhabit the same building in London; can department not speak unto department?

Question time

Limbering up for election night:
1) Which constituency will Michael Foot represent in the new House of Commons?
2) And David Steel (assuming he wins)?
3) Which seat, if shown on Thursday night as 'Labour hold', will mean the defeat of *two* sitting MPs?
4) If the Conservatives win the election, which candidate (assuming he holds his seat) will be the first in modern times to sit in four successive Parliaments on the government benches?

Answers on page 6.

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New tune from Ulster voice

ELECTION '83

WITHIN 24 hours of Mrs Thatcher's admission at one of her press conferences that an increased vote for Provisional Sinn Fein would be a cause for concern, West Belfast was plastered with posters of the Tory leader bearing the slogan: 'Give her a headache on June 9 – Vote Gerry Adams.'

Whatever the election results in the rest of the UK, the news from Northern Ireland seems certain to cause a frisson of annoyance to Mrs Thatcher. It is difficult to see how the two Ulster MPs for whom she is reputed to have a high regard – Enoch Powell and Gerry Fitt – can avoid defeat at the polls.

Enoch Powell has always seemed out of place in Ulster. He has consistently argued that the best way of safeguarding Northern Ireland's union with Britain would be for the province to be integrated fully within the United Kingdom. This was a major factor in his advocating that Ulster should have more parliamentary seats, a concession which Callaghan made in return for continued support from the Unionist Party. But most Ulster Unionists do not want integration; they want devolved government at Stormont and majority rule for themselves.

In Gerry Fitt's case, the wonder is that he has held on to his seat in West Belfast until now. But while Powell's unrepresentative views in Parliament have been offset by other Protestant voices, Fitt's has been the lone Ulster Catholic voice there. His own passionate convictions have made him incapable of representing the Catholic minority's views accurately, and it is possible that if there had been someone who did reflect Catholic opinion in times of crisis – for example during the hunger strike – the government could have been persuaded to react differently; they might then have averted the emergence of Provisional Sinn Fein as a political force.

With 17 Ulster seats in the new Parliament, the quality of the province's representation will be transformed. The Unionist majority will continue to hold at least 12 seats, divided between Paisley and the Official Unionists. But because the Protestant vote will be split in a number of seats where they have a small majority, it seems likely that four or five Catholics will be elected in the place of two – Gerry Fitt and Sinn Fein's Owen Carron, who never attended anyway.

Irish politicians have always been able to bring the most effective pressure to bear on Britain when they have been able to deploy a judicious mix of shrewd constitutional leadership backed by the unspoken threat that if they are seen to fail much more dangerous passions are waiting to be unleashed just off stage. The arrival of John Hume of the SDLP at Westminster would be an event of great importance in Anglo-Irish politics. It is a very long time since there has been anyone to argue the case of Irish nationalism effectively at Westminster and Hume will do that.

He is a politician whose formidable skills have been forged in a hard school. He has already mobilised, virtually single-handed, the support of Irish American politicians like Ted Kennedy and Speaker 'Tip' O'Neill and through them has reached a considerable body of influential friends in Congress. He has worked long and hard in the European Parliament and convinced its Political Affairs Committee to investigate the Ulster situation, a decision which recently enraged Mrs Thatcher. Only last week the latest of his initiatives bore fruit when all the main political parties in the Republic met for the first time in the New Ireland Forum and committed themselves to the task of drawing up a blueprint for Irish reunification that might be acceptable to Northern Protestants.

But besides his political skills, Hume has a street courage born of his own experience. He has been on the receiving end of violence from the security forces and is no respecter of persons or protocol. He knows that he will have another asset at Westminster in the shape of any Sinn Fein MP who refuses to take his seat. Like Irish political leaders before him he will bear a stark message 'This is your last chance to negotiate with me and people like me. The alternative is that constitutional politics will be swept aside and the field given over finally to men of violence.'

Mary Holland

Answers to Question time, p.5

1. Blaenau Gwent; 2. Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale; 3. Islington North (John Grant and Michael O'Halloran); 4. Reg Prentice.

Roach inquest on trial

ANGER about the official response to the death of Colin Roach, the young black man found dead in the entrance of Stoke Newington police station last January, has not been defused by the opening of the inquest on 6 June.

Within two days of Colin's death there was a demonstration outside Stoke Newington police station demanding a full independent investigation and there have been four demonstrations since. Police have arrested 98 people from the demonstrations, most of whose cases are still going through the courts. The campaigning groups believe a coroner has neither the independence nor the power to investigate Colin's death properly, and would like an investigation to consider the broader issues of policing and the black community.

Fears that an inquest would not discover the truth were increased by correspondence with the Home Secretary. On 2 March, the Roach Family Support Committee was told the Home Secretary agreed 'it is necessary to have a full independent and public inquiry into the matter. But this is precisely what the inquest is intended to provide.' But on 19 May, in a letter to Christopher Price MP, the Home Secretary agreed that an inquest was not the same thing as an inquiry and stated that it was 'very doubtful whether such an inquiry would best serve the interests of police-community relations in the borough.'

Police-community relations have deteriorated considerably since Colin Roach died. Police witnesses have themselves described how, on orderly demonstrations on 12 February and 12 March, police were rushed in from waiting vans at a certain point and people arrested from the front of the marches. Violence by police has been confirmed by defence witnesses, photos and police surgeons' reports.

In the case of James Roach, Colin's father, a charge of obstruction was dismissed when two series of photographs of the arrest were produced, showing neither the two 'arresting' officers nor the man whose arrest Mr Roach was supposed to have obstructed. Around one-third of the cases so far heard have been dismissed because of inadequate evidence.

In defending Mr Roach, Gareth Peirce read from the Metropolitan Police Regulations that forbid officers from collaborating when making their notes of an incident. While it is normal for officers to explain in court that they did make notes in pairs, some rather more irregular practices have emerged. In Joanne Johnson's trial a woman PC, whose evidence had been cast in doubt by a photograph, then had her notebook examined by the defence, who discovered additions and corrections in different handwriting. In Barnor Hesse's, two PCs admitted that they wrote their notes after being shown Sergeant Shaw's account of the incident.

Police prosecutors have been criticised repeatedly at Highbury, where most of the cases are being heard, for refusing to show statements to the defence beforehand. 'A clear denial of justice', according to Magistrate Fingleton. Edwards, one of the prosecutors, told the court that he was acting under orders from his superiors.

The location of the inquest at Clerkenwell County Court is an unsatisfactory compromise between St Pancras, the choice of Coroner Douglas Chambers, with space for 30 press and public, and Hackney Town Hall suggested by the GLC. St Johns School, next to Clerkenwell, has been closed at least for the first two days of the hearing, after a visit from Chief Superintendant Denman to suggest the half term be moved back to coincide with the inquest. When that proved impossible the Chair of Governors Father Hayes, the Head Miss Whelan and the Divisional Officer agreed to the closure. Denman insists, 'We didn't advise them to close'.

At a public meeting on 3 June members of the two campaigns expressed their determination to carry on the fight for an enquiry. Nothing that comes out of the inquest is likely to change that.

Rosalind Bayley

Colin Roach's father being arrested

John Sturrock/Network

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ELECTION '83

PETER KELLNER, Political Editor

The Wicked Witch of the West rides on

'NO, NO, NO, don't stop me. I'm in full flight and I've got to finish.' Mrs Thatcher was directing her words at *Weekend World's* Brian Walden, but it could serve as her motto for the whole election campaign.

Thatcherism airborne and at full throttle is a frightening spectacle. I do not share the opinion of those who think half the cabinet have jackboots in their cupboards, well-polished and waiting only for destiny and a minor act of left-wing provocation to present themselves. In my limited experience, most senior Conservatives are personally humane, civilised and, by their own lights, firm believers in democracy.

Mrs Thatcher and her team are, however, in danger of unleashing something very frightening after Thursday. Unless something remarkable happens in the final 48 hours of the campaign, the Conservatives will win an unusually large victory, achieved with unusual certainty of purpose and built upon emphasis on leader-worship.

What we risk is not yet fascism, or anything near to fascism. The Young Conservatives who responded at Wembley on Sunday to Kenny Everett's squalid appeals ('Let's bomb Russia; let's kick Michael Foot's stick away') as if they were responding to Dr Goebbels at a Nuremburg rally, do not yet wield any great power in the land. And it is to their credit that both Sir Keith Joseph and Nigel Lawson publicly distanced themselves from the Tory candidate for Stockton South, Thomas Finnegan, the former National Front enthusiast.

What we risk is the abandonment of one of the most important constraints on extremism in British politics. Until now no Tory leader has defended or treated with the far Right in any way. Edward Heath, when he was party leader, summarily dismissed Enoch Powell from the Conservative shadow cabinet in 1968 after Powell's earliest foray into racial alarmism. Earlier Tory leaders, whatever their own ideological location, each kept their distance from the party's extremists.

Mrs Thatcher does not. She defended Finnegan with a conviction that surprised even the most cynical journalist when the issue came up the week before last at one of the morning press conferences. She refused to disown Kenny Everett or the reaction of the Young Conservatives to him. 'He is only a comedian', she said. One of comedy's functions, though, is to illuminate human thoughts and emotions. Whatever Mrs Thatcher says, Everett illuminated one set of Tory emotions with terrible clarity.

Bluntly, Mrs Thatcher shares those emotions. It is well known that she will vote for the restoration of capital punishment when the matter is next debated, probably this autumn; and it is widely assumed that by then she will have a Home Secretary who shares her views on the subject. Less well known is that when she was a back-bencher some years ago she supported an early-day motion in favour of birching.

More generally she despises failure and people who need the support of the public welfare services. She herself, of course, has never needed recourse to such things. Not that her wealth is self-generated: she married a man who had inherited a fortune, and so cocooned herself in a plush, private welfare state financed from the efforts of others. She evidently has no problem defending her privilege secured in this manner while criticising the system on which most other people depend.

POSSIBLY Mrs Thatcher's greatest and most sinister triumph in the election campaign has been to condition her audiences to consider 'private' to be synonymous with 'good' and 'wealth-creating', and to consider 'public' to be synonymous with 'bad' and 'wealth-destroying'. By her audiences I mean the public to a large extent, the Conservative Party to a greater extent, and her interviewers on television almost totally.

Sir Robin Day's performance on *Panorama* last week was nowhere near as bad as he, for one, thinks; but neither he, nor Brian Walden, nor Alastair Burnet, have challenged her to justify her simple, divisive assertion. In Mrs Thatcher's world, private economic activity *as such* is good, and should be taxed as little as possible, while public economy activity *as such* is bad, and should cost as little as possible.

A moment's thought, if thought remains possible in this week of hollow right-wing celebration, shows this to be false. By no sensible measure of human activity can the private-sector activity of manufacturing cigarettes be regarded as doing more to advance our well-being than the publicly financed activity of treating cancer and bronchitis in National Health Service hospitals. Nor, except by some extreme resort to *laisser faire* principles, can the private-sector owner of a pornographic book shop be considered a greater wealth-creator than a comprehensive school teacher.

'If you spend it you've got to get if from somewhere', Mrs Thatcher told Brian Walden on Sunday. 'You've got to get it in the end from productive industry and services'. *Productive*? It is difficult to conceive that even Mrs Thatcher regards teachers and doctors as less productive than pornographers and cigarette manufacturers.

Even judged by Tory criteria – cost versus output – Britain's education and health services are among the most efficient in the world. At the margin it is almost certain that the long-term health and wealth of the country would be better served by greater public spending on these services than on lower taxes on industry. Mrs Thatcher does not answer this, because she is not challenged. And she is not challenged because neither her interviewers nor her political opponents have managed to lift the election debate to the moral and intellectual level at which she would find herself stranded.

Nor has she been impaled on the one instance of massive public spending which on its own undermines her economic philosophy: the Falklands war. Here was an event which, quite apart from rescuing Mrs Thatcher from being the most unpopular Prime Minister on record, was above all a demonstration of the potential superiority of public organisation over private competition. Had the Falklands venture been financed, week by week, by private investment, it is a fair bet that the whole operation would have gone into liquidation somewhere between Ascension Island and South Georgia.

Like most other observers of this campaign, I am sure that Denis Healey's and Neil Kinnock's remarks about the Falklands have cost Labour votes. But, in the longer term, we may be grateful that they spoke as they did, for they spoke the truth. It is never more dangerous, yet never more necessary, to speak the truth when a single, shrill voice such as Mrs Thatcher's is about to dominate a nation to an extent unparalleled in peace time.

However inadvertently, Healey and Kinnock have kept alive that flame of radical fervour and indignation which Labour will need to apply to its task of winning the next election. And even if Michael Foot steps down from the party leadership having led Labour to its worst post-war defeat, he too will have done something against impossible internal party odds to keep that flame alive.

In his way Mr Foot is like the Wizard of Oz – the well-meaning old man who can never quite achieve what he promises. 'You are a very bad man', says Dorothy, the Kansas girl, when she discovers the truth about him. 'No, my dear', replies the white-haired old chap, 'I'm a very good man; I'm just a very bad wizard.'

Perhaps that will have to be Mr Foot's epitaph – and in the grubby world of politics, not a bad one either. □

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CONSERVATIVE STATE

The supremacy of party

In *Politics in Industrial Society*, Keith Middlemas detailed the entrenchment of the corporate state. Here, in the first of two articles, he describes why corporatism has crumbled before the Tory assault

ONE EFFECT of the Conservative Party's concentration on economic policy, in opposition before 1979 and since, has been that surprisingly little has been said about direction of the political system. Yet the changes which are still being sought there are possibly more far-reaching than anything else and they follow logically from the pattern today's ministers set themselves eight years ago when they categorically rejected Edward Heath's 'corporatism' and the long tradition of tripartite negotiation between government, management and unions – which stemmed from the voluntary and highly effective arrangements under which production, supply and manpower were organised in the Second World War.

Even in the 1960s, faith in the capacity of the TUC or the CBI to deliver a bargain to government, for example on wages and prices, had worn thin, despite prolific use of the National Economic Development Council. The Wilson government turned to bodies like Aubrey Jones's Prices and Incomes Board, and, in a more general way, to legislation, to regulate industrial companies or trade unions' behaviour. Yet in spite of political leaders' disillusion, and the failure of Heath's Chequers talks in 1972, the idea of negotiated collaboration survived, to become an important element in Labour's 1975 Industrial Strategy. What I have called 'corporate bias', the in-built tendency of central institutions and governments to seek collective compromises, was certainly alive so long as Denis Healey remained at the Exchequer and Eric Varley at the Department of Industry.

Mrs Thatcher and her colleagues have deliberately, and in their public language, dramatically, set their faces against this tradition, in particular against the TUC's claim to have a legitimate voice in economic policy-making. Their attempts to withdraw the State from the industrial interventionism practised by all governments since 1945, and to allow the balance of power between unions and management to resolve itself at plant rather than government level, have been accompanied by the interesting argument that, since both sides have reneged on their responsibilities to the State set out in the 1944 White Paper on employment, the State should no longer try to lead the corporatist dance.

With its remote antecedents in the Thornycroft-Powell alternative economic policy of 1956-57, this thinking dominated the post-mortem on the Heath government. It has frequently been argued that if Heath had resigned at once, after the second election defeat in 1974, Whitelaw's succession could have been secured; by staying on, Heath ensured, not just a bitter personal contest for the leadership, but emergence of a standard bearer for values radically different from his own, or those of Macmillan, Eden and Churchill. However unfair to Heath and what he had tried to do, the post-mortem put in question not only incompetence and an aloof style of leadership, but two pillars of post-war Conservatism: Keynesian demand management technique as a means of ensuring economic growth, and close governmental association with industry and unions.

It may be that the majority of backbenchers were surprised that Mrs Thatcher won and it would not be hard to write her 18th Brumaire. Yet the poorly-led Heath apparatus collapsed quickly, to be followed by a capture of the organisation and the policy-making process, and the acquisition of some, like Lawson and Howell, who had been Heath's men. Like Bonar Law's consolidation after 1911, what happened in 1975 was important not so much for the issue of policy documents (a characteristic of Heath's late '60s Shadow Cabinet) but for an intellectual permeation of the party, constituency organisations, the business sector and the City. The Centre for Policy Studies (set up after the first 1974 election defeat) may have looked to old-style Conservatives distinctly un-Tory, to be taken seriously only as a means to keep outsiders such as Keith Joseph and Alfred Sherman quiet, but by 1979 it had acquired what for the 'wets' was an uncomfortably broad and supportive audience. In opposition, backbenchers' talk had begun to change: less gossip of foreign affairs, agriculture, defence, more argument about monetary stability, business confidence and the incubus of trade union power.

THE ATTRACTION of such a new party ethos should not be isolated from the economic crisis of 1974-76, culminating in the Labour government's acceptance of IMF terms. But that, like the failure of Heath's experiments, merely confirmed for those who adopted it the comprehensive new Tory explanation of Britain's accelerating relative economic and political decline. The ethos rested more on revelation than research, more on ideographs than history. But while it repeated uncritically Friedrich Hayek's attacks on the post-war settlement, it also drew historically on the small print of the 1944 White Paper and the harsh post-war views of Britain expressed by officials of the US Federal Reserve Board and the State Department. From the 1970s it adduced apparently irrefutable proof of the bankruptcy of Butskellism: evidence that intervention led to cosy inefficiency rather than competitiveness and growth, that stimuli to demand produced inflation, and property speculation rather than capital investment, that the public sector starved private industry of capital and initiative, and that wages policy first enfeebled management and then (when it broke down) led to accelerated trade union demands.

This view of post-war history avoided asking what the alternative might have produced – or indeed whether any alternative would have been acceptable to the British electorate – partly because to do so would have meant assessing the Tory years 1951-64 in the same bleak light as those of Heath. However the 1978-79 'winter of discontent' seemed conclusively to show that, despite all it had received in the Social Contract and labour legislation, the trade union movement could not deliver a bargain, even in a national crisis, to its own government, beyond the first two grudging years. The new Conservatives had seen the past and it had failed.

Their apocalyptic conviction led to some strange notions (that wage settlements had no effect on prices, that nationalised industries could be directed accurately by cash expenditure limits, that there was a precise link between money supply and inflation, and that there were no normative limits to the movement of interest rates). But businessmen and bankers who listened, horrified, as the Engineering Employers' Federation did to Geoffrey Howe talk of a bank rate of 25 per cent, assumed that these extravagant notions would be modified by the reality of government. They underrated the absolute conviction that, unless behaviour patterns in the industrial and labour markets changed, very rapidly, under the stimulus of monetary control and associated 'supply side' measures, there would be no alternative to bankruptcies and unemployment.

Ministers probably did not realise, in 1979, how high unemployment would go, nor the value of the pound, boosted by North Sea Oil (though Treasury officials warned what would happen, unless the medicine worked almost incredibly quickly); but their logic allowed them to envisage things outside the tradition of post-war consensus, as inevitable consequences of a virtuous circle. As a corollary, the political market would be freed: demonstration of where power really lay, as opposed to where it was believed to lie, would expose the

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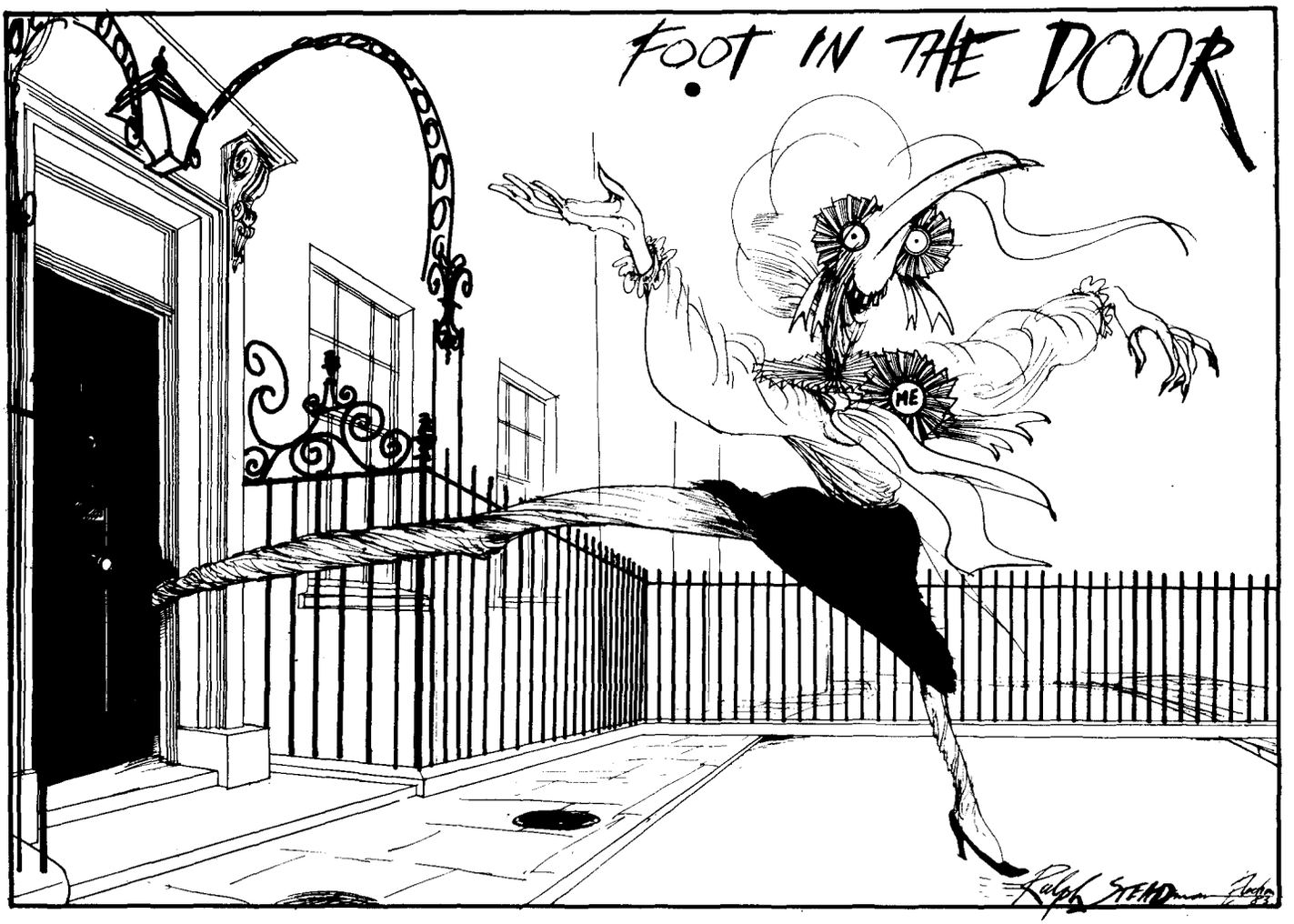

pretensions of trade unions (or industrial organisations) and the perennial habit of civil servants to divert Ministers into pragmatic accommodation.

Party was to be the engine of change (hence an extreme antipathy to talk about electoral reform, that legacy of Heath's March 1974 negotiation with the Liberals). The supremacy of party came to be expressed in an imagery of parliamentary sovereignty strikingly like that of Tony Benn, accompanied by a sort of authoritarian populism, pedagogic towards the electorate, high-minded and self-righteous towards the civil service, TUC, CBI or City institutions. Assertion of the power of an electoral mandate, against corporatist 'rights' to association with government, went far beyond earlier, only half-implied messages in Heath's Selsdon programme, or Wilson and Castle's introduction of 'In Place of Strife', to encompass a view that the power of central institutions and the civil service had distorted, too long and too widely, the proper functioning of the State.

IN EACH CASE, theory rested on practical example from Labour as well as Tory governments. What was said about the higher civil service drew on stereotypes from Crossman's Diaries as much as on the belief that Heath had listened too much to Sir William Armstrong and preferred him to his own parliamentary colleagues. Quite openly, Conservative ministers and their advisers now asserted that government needed greater authority over the mandarinate, in order to produce the dramatic changes they required. Their public language turned out to be more offensive, their private comments more disparaging than anything experienced by civil servants under Labour. Abolition of the Civil Service Department, and return of its main functions to the Treasury, together with the introduction of outside management consultants, and fierce reduction in numbers of bureaucrats were, evidently, intended not only to produce efficiency, but to deprivilege and expose to public scrutiny the bureaucracy itself. The resulting loss of morale has hardly been surprising.

Had this occurred in 1970-71, it may be doubted if even Treasury Ministers could have sustained their single-minded convictions for four years. But by 1979 a collapse of confidence in the capacity of demand management techniques, and in the alternative of statutory wages and prices policy, or industrial relations and monopoly and restrictive practices legislation, had permeated practically the whole civil service – which may explain Treasury, Industry and Trade officials' enthusiasm for the Industrial Strategy, in 1974-75, and their regret that it was so distorted by conflict in the Labour Cabinet. The mandarinate had had to accept, after the 1973 oil crisis, that the economy no longer behaved according to the old rules, predictive arts and capacity for fine-tuning. Their ability to resist the new dogma had been undermined in advance, not just because monetarist equations resisted empirical analysis (they still do), but because a contrary basis of experience could not easily be brought to bear.

With equal bluntness, the government put in their place more recently established fringes of the post-war State, downgrading their claims to share in the function of government. Of the two, the TUC found itself more in disarray. The switch of skilled working-class votes in 1979 seemed to confirm cleavages in the trade union movement, intra- as well as inter-union disparities stemming from the wages policy of 1976-77, as much as the winter of discontent. Despite Len Murray's loyalty to the Callaghan government, the wayward direction of the Transport and General after Jack Jones retired, and impending changes in the composition of the TUC General Council, made coordination of the TUC difficult – against a sombre background of European-wide deterioration in the terms of employment and collective bargaining, and an equally broad determination among confederations of employers, hard-pressed by recession, to restore managerial prerogatives eroded since the late 1960s.

The CBI and other employers' organisations and trade associations expected great advantages. *Their* disarray had occurred in 1974, when many members who had previously supported Heath and the Industrial Relations Act 1971 found it expedient to protest against a Labour government using the law to promote trade union interests. Thanks to the overtly political direction given to it by Sir John Methven and Lord Watkinson (and the repudiation of Campbell Adamson and the recent, over-corporatist past), the CBI was able to unify itself and contest successfully both Planning

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Agreements and Bullock's recommendations on industrial democracy. Whatever support they gave to Healey's post-1976 policy, or Eric Varley at Industry, it is clear from the CBI's and the Engineering Employers Federation's talks with Conservative Shadow Cabinet Ministers that industry and business looked to monetarist policy to provide a curb to wage inflation and unit costs, an improvement in industrial relations via a weakening of union bargaining power, and a curtailment of the sort of privileged bilateral access that the TUC's 'NEDC Six' had had directly to Wilson, Callaghan and Healey.

WHETHER THEY appreciated how stern Treasury Ministers would be with them, when interest and exchange rates soared, is uncertain: in retrospect, it seems that very many would have been prepared to pay the price, to secure continuity of policy for one or more five-year terms. And there is no evidence, even in the diversity of City markets, that bankers, stockbrokers or pension fund executives disagreed with the new government's determination to reduce government borrowing and inflation, and provide conditions for better investment and restoration of a long-term capital market.

1979 therefore represented a complex conjunction: loss of confidence among the administrative elite; disarray in the trade union movement, and a more severe gulf between it and the industrial and financial institutions than had existed in 1970; a decay of the post-war liberal intellectual centre of politics, symbolised by divisions in both major parties between centrists and fundamentalists as a result of experience – Tory in 1971-74, Labour in 1974-76; a propensity (however vague) among the electorate to envisage conflict and shake-up, far from the consensus and crisis management that had been key words in the '50s and '60s; and the arrival of a government which (in the Russian phrase) knew not only who was guilty but what was to be done.

It is scarcely in dispute that economic policy had malign effects on employment, investment, and public sector industry, nor that errors were made within the policy (for example the commitment to accept the Clegg pay awards, the introduction of 15 per cent VAT, the uncertain effect of cash limits), nor that large assumptions remain unproved (about the capacity of small businesses to survive, in Britain in the '80s as they did in West Germany ten years earlier, or about the UK's general competitive performance, relative to other OECD countries, or the balance between wages costs and non-price factors where export markets and foreign penetration of home markets were concerned).

However, it looks likely that, if success (defined as restored competitiveness, growth, new employment and higher production) really does occur, then very many workers, as well as managers and financiers, will think the price acceptable. What is hard to explain is why political resistance was not more effective in the Tory Party, in the mandarinate, and in the tripartite field in the years 1980-82 when the government seemed most at risk. □

ELECTION '83

No hope from IT

Caroline Shaw and Liz Else on new technology

LAST YEAR WAS Information Technology Year, an elaborate marketing exercise launched by the government on a largely unsuspecting and indifferent public to increase 'awareness' of new computing and information systems. This year is general election year and a large part of the government's campaign has had exactly the same aims.

So far, it appears to have been successful. Speaking at the IT 82 conference at the Barbican in December, Mrs Thatcher quoted a MORI poll finding that 62 per cent of the public had heard of IT ('There's no future without . . . IT') compared with only 17 per cent at the beginning of the year. But the real point of IT, aside from the consciousness raising, was laid out clearly in the same speech: 'We have in Britain the skill and inventive genius to harness information technology for our future jobs and prosperity . . . I have no doubt whatsoever that, in the cut-throat competition of the modern world, IT will mean *new* wealth and *new* jobs.'

Mrs Thatcher's (and, consequently, the Department of Industry's) gung-ho approach to new technology as a panacea for our economic ills admits of no doubt; the facts speak differently, both on the creation of new wealth and on the creation of jobs.

A report published last February by the National Economic Development Office (on behalf of the Information Technology Sector Working Party) says that the UK IT industry is characterised by two features. First, it is relatively small and fragmented, at a time when international competition is stepping up its activities. Secondly these government initiatives appear as a 'largely uncoordinated response to a wide variety of competing demands for severely limited resources and expertise'. The bottom line is that the UK has a trade deficit in IT of around £150 million per annum, which one forecast says will increase to £1 billion by 1990.

In terms of employment within the IT manufacturing industry, the industry 'cannot be expected to contribute directly to reducing unemployment overall', though it could continue 'indirectly and potentially on a massive scale' towards the creation of new jobs in the service industries.

But even the 'indirect creation of jobs in the service industries' has been called into question – ironically enough by Vicomte Etienne Davignon, the industry commissioner for the European Communities who succeeded Thatcher on the platform at the IT 82 conference. 'Far from making this possible move to creating these two million more jobs, present indicators suggest that there are actually a further two million at risk in the industries most directly affected by the application of IT.'

Additional information from: Tom Foremski, David Holmes, Paul Walton

ONE OF THOSE AREAS where jobs are most at risk lies in the office where large numbers of women are employed – with the multi-nationals peddling 'Total business solutions' which involve small computer systems and the wholesale introduction of wordprocessors and allied equipment. A large number of those lost jobs will come from within the civil service – with major government projects like the £20 million PAYE computerisation plans (which threatens 7,000 jobs), or the £700-million, 20-year plan to automate the benefit offices of the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) – which could cut from 20,000 to 25,000 jobs by 1995.

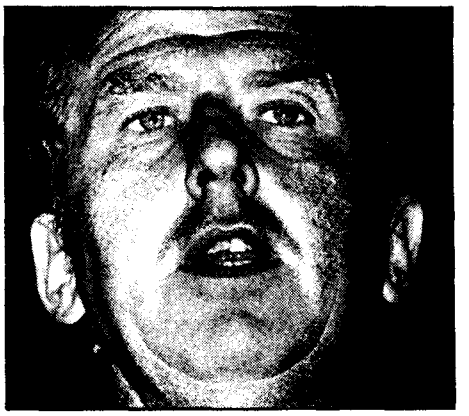
Naturally enough, the unions involved in the latter project, the Civil and Public Servants Association and the Society of Civil and Public Servants are incensed at the scale of the cuts – but the demoralisation of the unions would appear to be a key feature of the Tories 'information revolution'. In a recent *News of the World* article, agriculture minister Peter Walker makes some remarkably unequivocal statements about the future structure of society which show just how integral IT has become to the Tory philosophy:

> The information society spells the end of capitalism as we know it, and it will make old-fashioned state socialism impossible . . . people will not want to be bossed around by big government or dragooned into joining big unions . . . In a society with opportunities, widespread centralisation and control will be anathema.

Mr Walker is, however, clearly not aware of some of the DoI's desire to promote the user of just such widespread centralisation and control through part funding schemes available for industry to purchase computer-aided design and manufacture equipment.

So far, industry has been slow to take up the funds available under the DoI schemes. Many of the smaller engineering companies find that any capital investment is out of the question. There is thus a credibility gap in

Peter Walker sees the future that won't work



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the Tory industrial policy. The DoI has a longstanding unwillingness to intervene actually to restructure individual industries; market forces are expected to do the dirty work on the Department's behalf.

The few instances of intervention have involved individual companies – Inmos and ICL. Just 12 months after Mrs Thatcher was elected, ICL, the flagship of the UK's computer industry, was giving off acute distress signals. Senior management were summoned to Number Ten and Margaret Thatcher herself agreed to the installation of Robert Wilmot and a BP executive, Christopher Laidlaw, as his chairman and City 'minder'. Wilmot – an IT entrepreneur in the Clive Sinclair mould – got ICL back to profit. The cost was the loss of a third of the ICL workforce, or close to 20,000 jobs.

Wilmot chose to buy American and Japanese technology for ICL to sell, because the government and the City wouldn't give him enough money to do anything else. The Tories just kept ICL's collective head above water because the collapse of its own major computer supplier would have cost close to £300 million in replacing the many computer systems which are an integral part of government.

INMOS, ON THE OTHER HAND, was set up under the last Labour government in 1978, amid controversy in the Labour cabinet and opposition from Conservative MPs. The National Enterprise Board (NEB), which is now incorporated in the British Technology Group, funded Inmos with £50 million to develop a range of specialised chips. The market for these devices was predicted to be the biggest potential money-making component ever and is expected to reach $1 billion this year.

With products slowly starting to emerge, late last year Inmos began a search for a further £15 million to vamp up their Newport factory. This time, they could claim it was essential to Britain in its computer development plans against Japanese. The search was on primarily for private capital which proved predictably difficult to find. In March they managed to announce a £20 million loss and a further £15 million from the BTG. The good news is that, due to a world shortage in the type of chips Inmos produces, the company is now doing very well, as long as they can produce enough.

While 'intervention' may be a dirty word at the DoI, 'seed' or 'catalytic' money and 'awareness' are not. One of the most visible initiatives under the present government has been a blatant bid for the hearts and the minds of the nation's children with plans to put at least one microcomputer in every school. Mrs Thatcher's 'keyboard kids' are unlikely to get jobs as programmers or computer engineers, but they will at least grow up familiar with the technologies which helped to displace their mothers and fathers.

Meanwhile, at the top of the 'ability' range, there is also evidence of incoherence. The cuts of the University Grants Committee (UGC) have savaged – apparently quite arbitrarily – technology courses at universities like Salford, which had been generally thought to be a centre of excellence. On the other hand, IT conversion courses are being set up for Arts students. There, the DES is providing £50 million as its contribution to putting the Alvey proposals into effect.

The Alvey report, the work of a committee set up under British Telecom's John Alvey, proposed a £350 million programme of research into advanced IT – the so-called 'fifth generation' of computers – and is, to say the least, futuristic. (One DoI official is reported to have muttered, after its announcement, 'It is all speculative. We are talking about technologies that do not yet exist'.)

Amid all this, the NEB, which played a leading role under past Labour governments in directing IT policy, has lost its role, its teeth and finally its name under Tory rule. It has been merged with the National Research and Development Corporation (NRDC) to complete a completely new animal, the British Technology Group (BTG).

Mrs Thatcher's first industry secretary, Sir Keith Joseph, issued new guidelines to the NEB to sell off its majority investments as soon as possible. The result has been that, since 1979, the BTG has sold off 35 companies. Many of these have been sold off at an 'immature' stage before their full value has been realised.

The Labour manifesto has committed the party to revive and strengthen the NEB as a vehicle for promoting new or inadequately funded companies in IT. If they are not elected this time round, however, any future Labour administration would have its work cut out reversing some of the sell-offs – which, by then, would include British Telecom (BT), one of the nation's most profitable public corporations.

There has already been resistance to a sale within the unions involved. In a recent speech, Bryan Stanley, general secretary of the Post Office Engineering Union, warned that privatisation of BT would lead to 35,000 job losses in the UK telecommunications industry, even if only a quarter of BT's equipment requirements came from overseas. He added that the overwhelming majority of products seeking approval for connection to the public telecommunications network in the UK were imports. This is an industry that is supposed to be creating new jobs to make up for those being lost in the traditional sectors.

But the government is pinning most of its hopes for creating new information technology jobs on its plans to recable the UK for cable TV as well as business services. This plan has been supported by the Labour Party, but, there again, the Tories intend to hand over the project to the private sector, which will need to spend £10 billion over the next ten years to set up the scheme, probably resulting in insufficient restrictions and regulations being imposed on the private sector lest potential investors are frightened off.

'We have the means of creating a better and fuller life for all of our citizens,' wrote Peter Walker in his *News of the World* article. This time we must not fail.' Which sounds like a call to arms for all those on both sides who regard IT as possibly the last great battle of the capitalist age. □

Buying time

"Well in *our* country", said Alice, still panting a little, "You'd generally get to somewhere else – if you ran very fast for a long time as we've been doing".

"A slow sort of country!" said the Queen.

"Now, *here*, you see, it takes all the running *you* can do to keep in the same place.

"If you want to get somewhere else, you must run twice as fast as that!"

In one sense Lewis Carroll could have been anticipating twentieth century London. But in an altogether more astounding way, he also presages a discovery of Albert Einstein.

Einstein had a thought in his teens: "What would the world look like if I rode on a beam of light?" He found that it led to an extraordinary paradox – in keeping up with the speed of light we cut ourselves off from the passage of time. The principle of relativity was born.

Unfortunately, we cannot travel at the speed of light and the ravages of time endure. Particularly when it comes to energy, and a primary source of energy – oil. Like all fossil fuels, oil is a finite substance. Some day it could all be gone. But in one sense we can "buy time" against that day by making the best possible use of the oil we have.

"Buying Time" is the title of a film produced by Mobil. It tells the story of the making of the Mobil Cracking Complex. A £200m addition to Coryton oil refinery which will allow significantly more petrol to be produced from each barrel of oil.

The film doesn't feature Einstein, or indeed Lewis Carroll, but it does show one company's attempts to buy time for everyone's future.

If you would like to hire a copy of the film, ring Guild Sound & Vision on (0733) 63122.

Mobil

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Boiling into fascism

Under the old corporatism, Tory racists were held in check. Francesca Klug and Paul Gordon describe the free rein they are now allowed

'THIS IS a turning point in our party's history, no less than in our nation's,' Margaret Thatcher declared in 1977, two years after being elected leader of the Conservative Party. Since then, much attention has been paid to Thatcher's 'new Conservatism', with its stern emphasis on thrift and self-reliance; but rather less notice has been taken of the simultaneous revival of the 'old Right', the racists and empire loyalists in the Conservative Party who had been in the political wilderness until Thatcher's accession.

There has always been a core of MPs on the right of the Conservative Party who have been active in an informal anti-immigration lobby. This operated largely, though not exclusively, through the Monday Club. In 1972 the Club was infiltrated by the National Front and as a result whole branches were closed down at Edward Heath's instigation.

Since Thatcher replaced Heath, however, the Club's relations with the party leadership appear to have improved. In 1977 the Club's journal, *Monday World*, quoted a letter from Mrs Thatcher, in an item headed 'Encouragement from the Leader!' thanking the Club for its help in her efforts to win the next general election. The Monday Club's continuing support for the party leader was evident at the 1982 party conference when Club stickers were distributed with the slogan, 'I'm backing Thatcher'. In 1981, the Club was said by its chairman, Sam Swerling, to have 'a larger membership than we had 12 months ago . . . more Members of Parliament in research and study groups than at any time in the Club's history. It is quite evident that the radical right of the Tory party is in the ascendancy'.

The Monday Club's position on race and immigration has always been clear. In 1980, the October edition of *Monday World* complained that all 'black youth leaders . . . wanted was more money, more facilities, more services to improve their self-imposed ghetto, while the taxpayer was to pay for these requirements . . .' Two Monday Club reports in 1981 and 1982 expressed support for a 'constructive repatriation programme', proposing that the Ministry for Overseas Aid should be redesigned as a Ministry for Overseas Resettlement.

When asked to comment on the Monday Club's scheme in 1981, Mrs Thatcher replied that, 'British citizenship, once having been granted, cannot be taken away' and that 'no one is saying to them go'. She did not offer, as *The Times* said she should have, 'a specific rejection' of the Club's scheme.

Harvey Proctor, author of the repatriation reports, had been excluded from the official list of Conservative candidates during Edward Heath's leadership. He re-entered it after the change in the party leadership and was elected MP for Basildon in 1979. Since then he has ceaselessly sought information from government ministers on repatriation schemes, the black birth rate and the extent of black involvement in crime.

Another leading member of the Monday Club, Ronald Bell, was recommended for a knighthood by Mrs Thatcher in 1980; when he died in 1982, the Prime Minister told the House of Commons that it had lost 'one of its most distinguished members'. Bell was connected to another group, Tory Action, whose aim, as explained in its newsletter *Round Robin*, is to 'influence Party policy and stiffen Party attitudes on such issues as law and order, race and immigration . . . etc'. One of its founder members, G. K. Young, a former deputy head of MI6, wrote in an article on 'patriotism', 'We look for a focus of loyalty but on every occasion the Monarch has to be photographed beaming at a piccaninny while Prince Philip and Prince Charles caper about in yarmulkas (Jewish skullcaps). The start of the break-up of Britain is only too apparent.'

Amongst Bell's efforts was the formation by him of an 'immigration group' of MPs in 1981. Only two of the seven MPs in the group were also members of the Monday Club, but three others, Michael Brotherton, Nicholas Winterton and John Stokes, along with Bell and Harvey Proctor, attended meetings organised by a group called WISE (Welsh, Irish, Scottish and English) which was founded in 1974 to 'encourage a sense of kinship with our people all over the world'. WISE meetings, according to the anti-fascist journal *Searchlight*, have been a focus for known fascists.

In addition to these formal groupings there are many Conservative MPs with an anti-immigration position. Thus in October 1981, 27 Tory MPs signed a motion sponsored by John Carlisle MP, 'looking forward to the day' when Enoch Powell returned to the government side of the house. One of the only major pieces of legislation on which the government was defeated during its term of office was the Immigration Rules in December 1982, when 51 Tories refused to support the minor liberalisation put forward by the government.

A SEPARATE but parallel development to the increasing self-confidence of the Tory anti-immigration lobby is the growth of organisation on the right of the party devoted to challenging what they describe as the political and theoretical consensus which has dominated post-war politics.

The first of these, the Centre for Policy Studies, was founded in 1974 by Sir Keith Joseph, as an alternative to the Conservative Party's own Research Department and 'to turn the Tories away from the pragmatism and interventionism of the Heath years'. The Centre director, Alfred Sherman, has been a speech-writer for both Margaret Thatcher and Sir Keith Joseph, and while none of the Centre's publications have focussed on race or immigration, Sherman's own views on these subjects are instructive.

Writing in the *Daily Telegraph* in September 1976, Sherman described 'the imposition of mass immigration from backward alien cultures' as 'just one symptom of this self-destructive urge reflected in the assault on patriotism, the family . . . the Christian religion . . . traditional morality . . . in short all that is English and wholesome'. In 1979, in an article entitled 'Britain is not Asia's fiancé', Sherman described the 'Asian fiancés issue' as 'the visible tip of a submerged but inescapable problem: the conflict between the instincts of the people and the intellectual fashions of the establishment where British nationhood is concerned'.

Another right-wing 'think tank', the Salisbury Group, was formed in 1976 but has been much more active since 1982. In early 1982, in the wake of the Brixton riots, the Group published a pamphlet, *The Old People of Lambeth*, which claimed that the inhabitants of Lambeth felt that 'white English life has a richness of civilisation which West Indian life lacks . .. without any choice of theirs, they [the English] find the things they value neglected or removed'.

Later the same year, the Group launched its journal *Salisbury Review*, 'to establish a Conservative dominance in English life'. An article in the first issue by John Casey, a Fellow of Caius College, Cambridge, described how the 'great English cities are now becoming alienated from national life and that the Victorian achievement of civilising them and rescuing them from the old city

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mob, shows signs of breaking down'. Casey's suggested solution was 'retrospectively to alter the legal status of the coloured immigrant community, so that its members become guest workers . . . who would eventually return to their countries of origin with their pension benefits, property and perhaps a large measure of compensation out of public funds'. Casey's paper was first presented to the Conservative Philosophy Group – an informal outfit whose meetings have been attended by, among others, Margaret Thatcher and Enoch Powell.

Of course, the Prime Minister's attendance at Conservative Philosophy Group meetings, or her knighting of Ronald Bell, does not in itself imply support for policies of repatriation. Indeed, government ministers, including Mrs Thatcher, have expressed their commitment to 'a society in which all individuals, whatever their race, colour or creed, have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities'.

Nevertheless, before the 1979 election, Margaret Thatcher was closely associated with the anti-immigration lobby. In 1977, she refused to dissociate herself from the Tory candidate who fought the Stechford by-election on a virulently anti-immigration platform. The following year she made her infamous statement that 'people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture'. Just before the 1979 election, Mrs Thatcher said that she stood by that statement; and immigration was a central issue of the Tory election manifesto. After taking power, the government introduced all but two of the measures it had pledged to take to reduce immigration. In addition, while she failed (openly, at least) to condemn the statements and actions of the pro-repatriation lobby within the Tory party, Mrs Thatcher personally intervened to prevent John Moore MP from joining the all-party Joint Committee Against Racialism.

In February this year, Mrs Thatcher made a laudatory speech about 'a British Empire that took both freedom and the rule of law to countries which would never have known it otherwise'. This has been followed by a number of articles from Conservative journalists, and the sentiments expressed – for example, in Peregrine Worsthorne's 'Why Nationalism is Good For Us' (*Sunday Telegraph*, 17.4.83) or Paul Johnson's 'Why Gandhi Isn't Good For You' (*Daily Telegraph*, 16.4.83) are strikingly similar to those conveyed by the Prime Minister in her Falklands 'victory' speech at Cheltenham on 3 July 1982.. 'We fought for our own people and for our sovereign territory,' she said. Those who thought Britain was 'no longer the nation that had built an empire and ruled a quarter of the world . .. were wrong'. Clearly excluded from this definition of the British nation was Britain's black population who did not rule under the empire but were ruled by it.

The message of the 'new Conservatism' for multiracial Britain is that immigration must be controlled, strictly, and that those who are here can stay and should not be 'discriminated against' provided that they too adhere to Victorian values and those which grew out of the empire. (The leaked minutes of Mrs Thatcher's Family Policy Group proposed 'government encouragement of immigrant behaviour in accorance with philosophy of self-reliance, e.g. Asian corner shops'.) But at the same time, the anti-immigration and pro-repatriation lobbies grow more vociferous and achieve more respectability; and on issues such as nationalism, the 'new Right' and the 'old Right' have now become indistinguishable.

Two Conservative supporters have themselves warned of a possible future. Paul Wilkinson, author of *The New Fascists* (Grant McIntyre, 1981), said in 1981 that while attention focussed on the alleged infiltration of the Labour Party by the Militant Tendency, 'a very worrying force indeed, an infiltration of a different and sinister kind is taking place within the Conservative Party'. And earlier this year, Peregrine Worsthorne, himself on the traditional right of the party, warned that 'Thatcherism Mark Two' would be 'very much more deeply controversial than the Mark One . . . In other words, we have seen nothing yet and the real battles are still to commence'. Fascism, Worsthorne wrote, 'is what happens to Conservatism when it boils over', and the 'boiling point' of Mrs Thatcher is 'much lower than that of any other Prime Minister in modern times'. □

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ELECTION '83

North of the border

Rob Edwards on the demise of the devolution issue

THE BEARDED YOUTH in denims bearing luminescent red stickers tentatively proffered a leaflet. The woman, seeming unnaturally weary, ignored it, moved very close and rasped an address in Morningside, one of Edinburgh's genteel quarters. 'Oh', said the youth hesitantly, 'do you want to join the Labour Party?' 'No', she replied, 'I'm a prostitute – do you want to come?'

On the street and on the doorstep in any election campaign, canvassers meet with all kinds of unpredictable responses. But they soon begin to recognise certain patterns and identify common themes. In this election the pattern comprises alarm about unemployment, suspicion of Foot's fitness for leadership, concern over Labour's policies on defence and the Common Market, and respect for Thatcher the war leader. Canvassers also report considerable residues of uncertainty and, in some cases, a great thirst for knowledge.

The most remarkable feature of the campaign in Scotland is how similar it has been to that being fought in England and Wales. It has the same idiosyncrasies, the same preconceptions and the same truisms. It has been less distinctively Scottish than on previous occasions.

One explanation for this is the decline of the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the associated lack of interest among electors in the idea of devolution. The SNP will be lucky if they hold both of their existing seats, Gordon Wilson's Dundee East being particularly vulnerable to Labour. The Scottish opinion polls have shown the SNP being slowly but surely squeezed out by the other parties. When MORI asked Scottish voters to name the parties with the best policies on a wide range of issues, the SNP scored just 3 per cent or under on every issue except devolution.

The SNP is quick to blame the London-orientated media for their problems. With some justification, alongside Plaid Cymru, they are fiercely critical of the fact that nationally networked programmes like the *Jimmy Young Show* and Robin Day's *Question Time* largely ignore the nationalists and give the other three parties an unfair advantage. A planned legal action against the BBC and IBA to remedy the situation had to be dropped, partly because of its possible costs and partly because it could not be heard soon enough. In an election which more than ever before is being fought and won on television, parties like the SNP are bound to suffer.

This dilemma has obliged the SNP to consider some bizarre solutions. It was seriously mooted a few months ago that they should put up a candidate against Margaret Thatcher in Finchley – a task that would have been welcomed by the party's active London branch. The idea came to nothing, ironically because it may have led to the SNP being considered as a UK party in broadcasting terms which would have resulted in less Scottish coverage. In retrospect the SNP are probably grateful not to be listed with the string of strange characters that are committed to taking on the Prime Minister.

Many other party activists north of the border echo the SNP's disenchantment with centralised radio and TV coverage. London TV crews have been flown up daily to examine Roy Jenkins's (shaky) prospects in Glasgow Hillhead, or to follow Denis Healey and Walter Cronkite round Stirling. As the general secretary of the Scottish Liberal Party, David Miller, put it: 'I'm sick of explaining every day how far it is from A to B and where exactly Kirriemuir is – why don't the media make more use of their indigenous Scottish talent?'

BUT IT is not all the fault of the media. Over the last couple of years the SNP has been torn with the kind of internal strife that makes Labour's bickering look tame by comparison. The long battle by some of the SNP's traditionalists to exorcise the socialist '79 Group, which ended in compromise just before the election was called, has taken a heavy toll. The party's morale and credibility have been seriously weakened and local Labour parties throughout Scotland are reporting a significant influx of ex-SNP activists. Canvass returns in Labour areas also suggest a noticeable swing from SNP to Labour.

Devolution has always fascinated politicians and the media more than ordinary Scots – a divide that has widened over recent years. There have been rumblings of rebellion from some strongly pro-devolution Labour MPs mindful of the apparent impotence of Scotland's Labour majority under UK Tory rule. We have heard vague talk about using direct action to force the establishment of a Scottish Assembly should Thatcher win again.

Scotland's aspiring version of Tony Benn, former chairman of the Scottish party George Galloway, recently argued the case in *Radical Scotland* for a 'full-blown effort at Parliamentary disruption by Scottish MPs' pointing out that, as with the Irish Home Rule Bill 80 years ago, 50 MPs 'with the will and imagination can render Parliament inoperable.' A few weeks later Mr Galloway was off down south on his unsuccessful mission to win nomination for the safe Labour seat in the Rhondda valley.

For Labour supporters in England, the most encouraging aspect of the campaign in Scotland remains the apparent dominance maintained by Labour. Few doubt that Labour will end up with at least a majority of the 72 seats, with optimists predicting a possible 49 (it held 42 of the 71 seats in the last parliament).

Scotland's radically different housing tenure (over half public sector tenants compared to less than a third in England), its traditionally stronger public health service and its reliance on manufacturing industry are products of the country's different class structure which tend to favour Labour. Paradoxically, the Tories have seen fit over recent years to use Scotland as a test bed for regressive legislation planned for England and Wales, particularly with regard to police powers and control of rates.

Scotland has long been subject to high unemployment (currently around 16 per cent) and has experienced unprecedented industrial devastation since 1979. But the familiar and tragic litany of Talbot, Invergordon and (perhaps) Ravenscraig has been accompanied by a more optimistic list of industrial struggles that have won partial victories – Lee Jeans, Plessey, Lovable Bra and, within the last month, Timex. It would be misleading, as the SNP attempted, to characterise these as a powerful 'Scottish resistance', but they do represent an important and continuing affirmation of Scotland's radical tradition. And, should worse come, they could supply the seeds for a more effective and prolonged struggle. □

THIS ENGLAND

£3 book tokens for entries printed (on postcards, please).

☐ Mr Michael Jefferson-Brown, a daffodil specialist, of Martley, Worcestershire, had intended to fight Walsall North for the Alliance but he decided that his job must come before politics. – *The Times* (James Kennard)

☐ The Ministry of Agriculture gave the World Rabbit Association £24 last year. But despite exhaustive searches through the Ministry no trace could be found of the organisation. – *Daily Telegraph* (G. Moor)

☐ The report, which was delivered to the MSC last week as a basis for the government's Youth Training Scheme, aims to teach such survival skills as getting up in the morning, keeping fit and learning how to feed oneself. – *Education* (L. Rich)

☐ Even for the smallest family, school fees make a large hole in the budget. – *The Times* (Rodney Legg)

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DIARY

Fay Weldon

Somerset

Two swallows in the barn today, but no one's going to say they make a summer. Farmers predict a drought after the floods, but then it's in their nature to weep all the way to the bank. The actual state of the weather seems to make very little difference to their activities: mowing hay for silage can and does go on in the wettest weather – if you can call the new thick, bright-green, waving, pest-free, perfect grass they grow as hay. Two crops a year, grown on a mixture of dust and nitrogen, and the mower's so efficient the whole hill-side rumbles when it's at work. Our small patch of land looks pitifully pale and neglected by comparison, just a refuge for wildlife – butterflies, birds; even a fox. Slugs this year, too, in such numbers I reckon that what we have is a mass exodus from someone else's pest-controlled estate.

○

Two magpies have nested in the yew tree: beautiful but disagreeable birds. They search the dry-stone walls for nests, pick out the nestlings, throw them to the ground, then fly off laughing. Someone referred to them angrily as 'those Thatcherite birds'. Not someone local: the West Country is traditionally Tory, unemployment a way of life, and a Labour poster not just a rarity, but seen by the neighbours as an actual act of aggression. But boundary changes have turned this into a marginal Con/Lib seat, for which we have to be grateful. (How low have we sunk!) The Alliance pleads for a tactical vote from the occasional Labour supporter, saying, rather endearingly, if we get in we'll bring in proportional representation and you'll never have to vote for us again!

○

This has been a very distressing election. See it how you will – a media-event, a poll-determined contest in which the most popular wins by virtue of its popularity, a battle between three ad agencies, one well founded, two not – that's at best. At worst it's the seduction of an innocent populace into believing that opinion is the same as knowledge, wisdom, power.

'Hey, Emma, what do you think about the Common Market?"

'I think we should stay in.' (Pollster takes note: goes away.)

'Why, Em?'

'Dunno.' (Or worse, 'read it in the *Sun*.')

As well ask the children what time they should go to bed. To flatter the unwise may make you popular, but leads to tears tomorrow – God knows what the alternatives are.

○

Extraordinary, though, to see those fitful fears of the Fifties, those nagging worries, those boils on the then body politic, quiescent for so long, suddenly coming to their long predicted, awful heads. We feared the corruption of the American Way of Life – the creeping razzmatazz, bright lights and general vulgarisation. We feared Materialism – the worship of profit and objects: we worried about how we were to live without God, what we were to do without a morality. We feared Advertising (and panicked about subliminal TV control), agitated about the separation of Science from the Rest, and we feared television. Goodness, how we feared television. TV would, we thought, mesmerise the population, dull their responses, harden them to violence, and hopelessly confuse information and wisdom. Then the Sixties came and we forgot all about all that.

○

And now, here we are in 1983. And what chance do we have against the US, whose unsinkable missile carrier we are? And what chance do we have against those weapons of persuasion, advertising and TV? How fares national integrity in the face of profit? And what chance, I ask you, does the Labour Party have in the face of Saatchi and Saatchi? He who advertises best (most) wins. And S & S most certainly advertise best and most and brilliantly. Have you ever heard a more powerful, a more persuasive, a more disingenuous radio commercial than theirs,

making you believe that black was white, steering your hand at the ballot booth, away from Lab and up to Con? There is no control over these advertisements: no appeal, not even an Advertising Standards Authority to complain to. No restriction on money spent, either, and Conservative funds seem unlimited. And did you see the one comparing the Labour Manifesto to the Communist Manifesto? 'Like your Manifesto, Comrade!' Brilliant!

○

But I have here on my desk the Programme of the Party of Hitler, 1932, and the Conservative Party Manifesto, 1983, and I would construct a similar ad under the heading 'Heil! Mrs Thatcher. Signed A. Hitler' and compare statements in both, such as how freedom and responsibility go together, and how a free State cannot permit a foreign power to scrutinise its actions, and how the pensioner must be protected, and inflation conquered, and prices brought down, and with just a slightly slippery pen make the charge hold. But I won't, you see, and the Labour Party won't. Its enemy is its integrity. Any more than they will start implying that it's the CIA which funds Saatchi and Saatchi. The Left flails and faints in this new media world of simple slogans; of ideas and beliefs which can be contained in a phrase: it can only grope its way forward, by argument and counter-argument. It will always appear confused and riven by dissension. Honest men are full of doubt, and bad men of certainty. There is no argument about self-interest. It's wonderfully simple, and wonderfully saleable. The worries in the Fifties were about dignity, intelligence and honour. Well, it seems that the price of dignity, intelligence and honour is eternal vigilance, and we have simply not been vigilant enough. It's all very tragic.

○

In the meantime the Royal Bath and West show has started. Life goes on, and you can't get down to the shops for cars.

ROGER WOODIS

Hoarse vessel

'Tomorrow is ours.' – Mrs Thatcher

I fill the screen,
My subjects all adore me;
When Friday dawns
I will have swept the board.
When I am Queen
And sweeping all before me,
My willing pawns
Can safely be ignored.

Four hundred seats,
To put my throne no higher –
My goodness me,
There'll be no turning back.
I'll still the bleats
Of Whitelaw, Pym and Prior,
And set them free
By giving them the sack.

The stagnant pool
Is putrid with pollution,
The down-at-heel
Have long abandoned hope.
Today I rule
With iron resolution;
Today with zeal,
Tomorrow with the rope!

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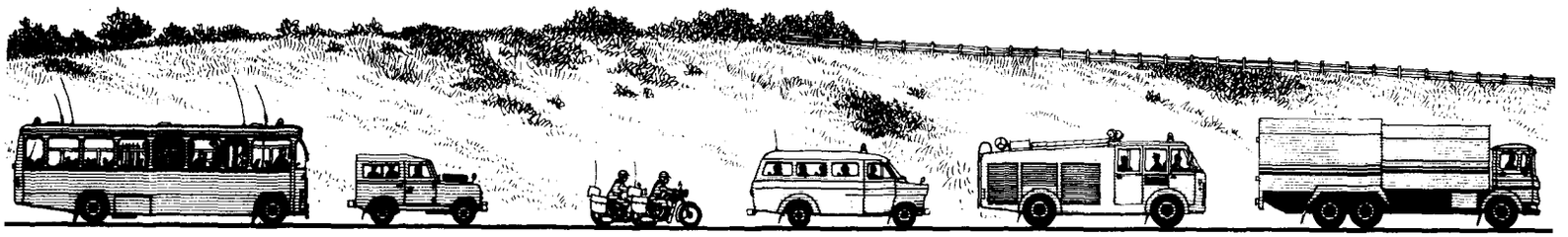


Nuclear convoy: Outriders and a guard in a transit van come first. Up to half a dozen 10-ton 'Mammoth Major' armoured trucks carry the nuclear payload. A fire t Safety Team, follows behind. There may be additional Land Rovers or civilian vehicles carrying escorts and scientific staff

How the bomb travels . . . from whe

TO THE RAF guards and supervising scientists on board the mysterious convoy which has been criss-crossing Britain for several years, their load is obliquely referred to as 'Chewing Gum'. That is a nickname for nuclear missiles and weapons. This is the first illustration of the entire convoy ever published.

Every year, on the government test ranges at Porton Down in Hampshire, an exercise called 'Senator' anticipates the consequences of an accident to nuclear weapons in transit. Small radioactive sources are used to simulate the spillage of the bombs' nuclear core. Wide areas are rapidly cordoned off under military guard. The exercises are to test the efficiency of the 'Special Safety Teams', which accompany each transport by convoy.

Last July, the *New Statesman* published the first, still unique, picture of part of a convoy. At the time, it was not possible to establish further details. Since then, we have obtained details about the manufacture, storage and transport of nuclear weapons from those formerly involved in this work and sightings of the convoy by readers.

Nuclear weapons movements are the responsibility of an unlisted Ministry of Defence 'Special Safety Organisation', mainly run by the Royal Air Force. The core of each convoy consists of between two and six armoured ten-ton British Leyland lorries. The lorries (see illustration) appear to have a telescoping roof, with the forward part of the roof and sides sliding under the rear. Weapons may then be hoisted in from above. Flanking the lorries are minibuses carrying armed guards of the RAF Regiment wearing distinctive green berets. Military motorcycle outriders travel ahead of and behind the group. All the vehicles are painted green.

According to a former member of the RAF escort teams, their sensitive cargo is usually referred to only by the nickname 'Chewing Gum'. Although the escorts are regularly trained in nuclear weapons accident procedures, they do not necessarily know what weapons they are carrying, or for whom.

Local police forces are always informed about the convoys and may send their own outrider escorts. But local authorities, according to the former RAF source, would 'never' be told. 'It's kept very quiet,' he said. At least four times in the last 15 months, the convoy has been observed stopped by an accident (nothing worse than burst tyres and a broken windscreen).

The RAF Special Safety Organisation transports both nuclear bombs for use by aircraft like Tornado and Jaguar (which are replacing the V Bombers) and the Royal Navy's nuclear weapons. This includes British-made nuclear depth charges and the warheads for Polaris/Chevaline missiles.

Each convoy is accompanied by escorts from a Special Safety Team. This includes an RAF fire tender, which always travels with the main convoy, and a remarkable, special bus, which may follow the main convoy at distances of a quarter of a mile or more. According to descriptions provided by several observers, the bus – registered 47AC92 – is equipped to act as a mobile armoury and control centre in the event of accident or terrorist attack. It has many link radios, an office in its front and, in the rear, appears to carry an additional motorcycle for despatch riders, as well as other special equipment.

Besides the bus and fire tender, four or five other vehicles carrying officials and technicians may travel with the convoy. These can include undercover 'civilianised' RAF vehicles, specialists from the Aldermaston research establishment and Navy officers accompanying RN weapons.

During much of 1982 a peace camp was established at Burghfield. Campers regularly saw the convoy and its individual vehicles. On several occasions, the armoured lorries would go to a loading area adjacent to a series of huge, concrete blockhouses at Burghfield, which are the final assembly area for British nuclear weapons.

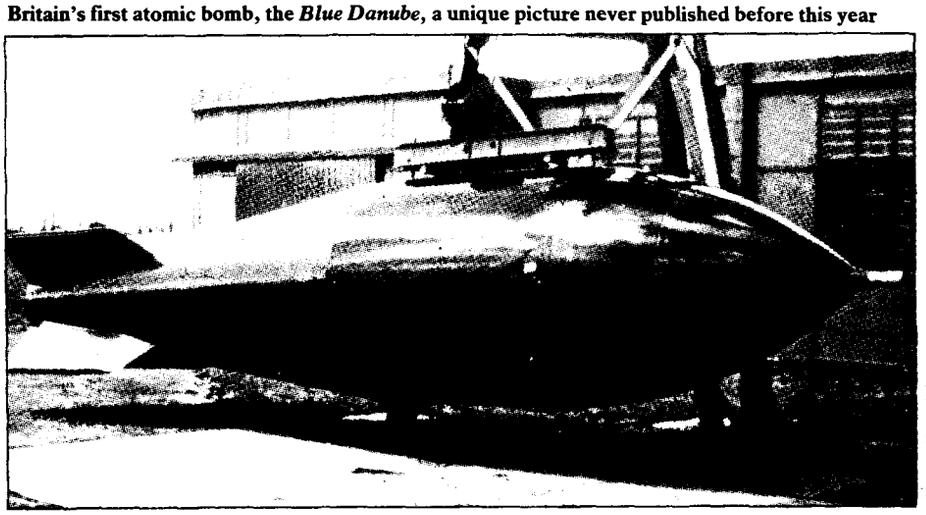
More recently, the convoy has been observed by peace campers at the Faslane Polaris base in Scotland. It appears that trips have recently become much more frequent, since existing Polaris warheads are currently being replaced by the Chevaline system of independently targetted weapons. Local residents were reportedly accustomed to seeing the convoy once every three months; now new deliveries happen monthly.

The Ministry of Defence was evidently displeased when public reports of the campers' encounter with the convoy appeared a month ago. The Ministry was 'not prepared to confirm or deny whether such convoys exist,' a spokesman said – adding nonetheless that 'we object strongly to anyone drawing attention to movements of this kind of material.' Previously, similar stonewalling responses have been made to local authorities which asked about nuclear weapons storage or transport in their districts. The Ministry has attempted to suppress public knowledge of the whereabouts of nuclear weapons by issuing a special D Notice request.

Handling nuclear weapons is one of the responsibilities of the defence Ordnance Board – a joint army, navy and air force organisation. It is based at Charles House, a government office block in London's West Kensington, where its section of the east wing is entirely sealed off from other civil service users. Two divisions of the Board, 'N' and 'S', are solely concerned with nuclear weapons and their support.

Although the number of nuclear weapons has been growing, the number of nuclear storage sites has been reduced, by both US forces and British. At the height of the V Bomber era, weapons were stored on some ten airfields, as well as at two major central depots, both now disused – No 92 Maintenance Unit (MU) at Barnham, near Thetford in Norfolk, and No 94 MU, at Faldingworth near Lincoln. The main US nuclear

Britain's first atomic bomb, the *Blue Danube*, a unique picture never published before this year



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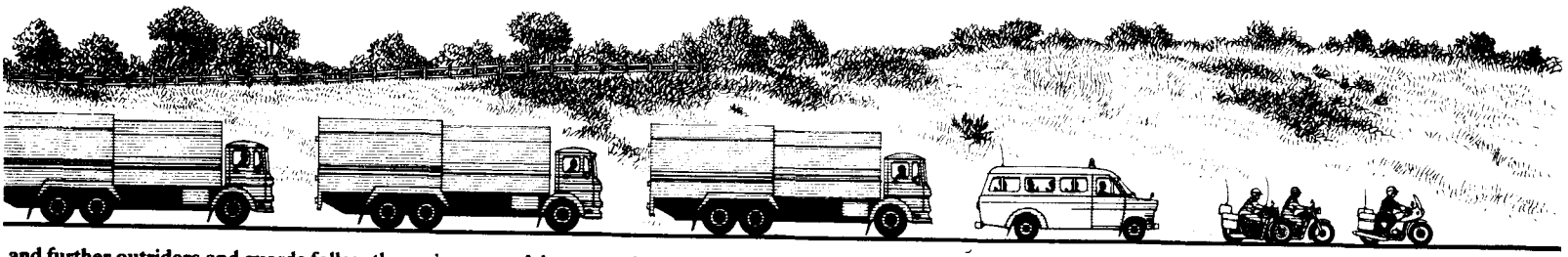


and further outriders and guards follow the main group. A bus, carrying a control centre and members of the nuclear emergency Special

Louis Mackay

: to where

stores are for the F111 bombers at Lakenheath and Upper Heyford, and on the Holy Loch submarine base. Major RAF bomb stores remain prominently visible at airbases such as Waddington and Scampton near Lincoln. Some RAF sources suggest that a central reserve of nuclear weapons is kept at the Maintenance Unit at Chilmark, west of Salisbury.

The map also shows the sites at which the major components of British nuclear weapons are manufactured. Plutonium, the key ingredient, is produced in the nuclear reactors at Chapelcross and Calder Hall, and refined at Windscale (like most other nuclear ingredients, it can also be conveniently recovered from older weapons in the stockpile). At Aldermaston, the plutonium is converted from raw metal 'billets' to the specialised parts of the bomb core.

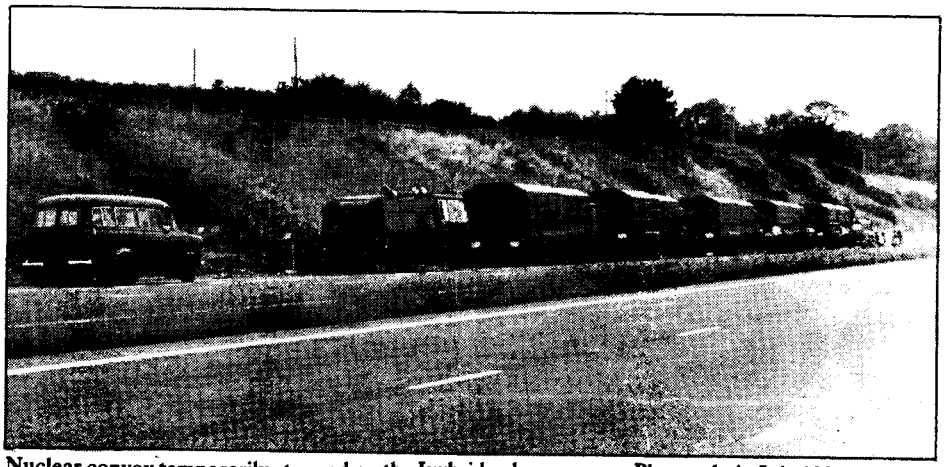
Around the core are positioned additional layers of beryllium and natural uranium, which are manufactured at the Cardiff Royal Ordnance factory. They make the explosion more efficient. The Cardiff factory can also fabricate ordinary uranium to be used as the shell of an H Bomb, focussing energy onto its thermonuclear fuel.

The key part of that fuel is tritium, a relatively short-lived heavy isotope of hydrogen, now manufactured at the Chapelcross plant. The tritium plant was set up to replace US supplies which were formerly used in all British hydrogen bombs. Chapelcross may also be able to recover and reuse tritium from 'retired' nuclear weapons.

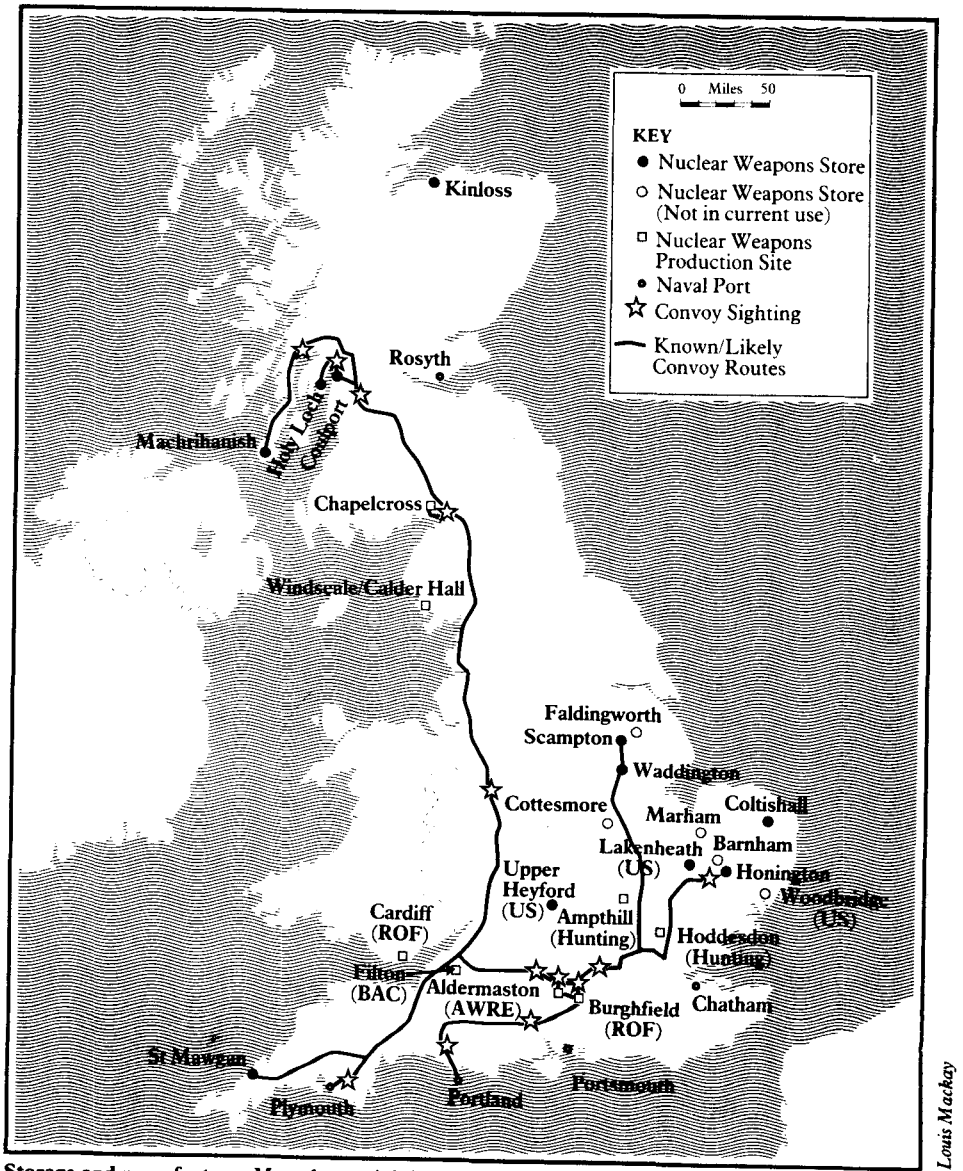
The production of non-nuclear components for British nuclear weapons has been privatised from the very beginning. The key company producing nuclear bomb casings and similar parts is Hunting Engineering, which has factories in Ampthill, near Bedford, and Hoddesdon, Herts. Both Hunting and British Aerospace have been closely involved in the development of the Chevaline Polaris warhead, and now in Trident. Hunting Engineering only makes weapons; one of its other major products is the cluster bomb.

The final assembly of all these components is performed at the Burghfield Royal Ordnance Factory. When completed, the internal arrangement of warhead components is minutely checked before a weapon is 'certified' operational. Once checked and released from Burghfield, a convoy may then deliver the nuclear weapon to an operational base, ready for use.

Duncan Campbell



Nuclear convoy temporarily stopped on the Ivybridge bypass, near Plymouth, in July 1982



Louis Mackay

Storage and manufacture: Map shows sightings of the nuclear weapons convoy since April 1982, and likely travel routes. Confirmed nuclear weapons stores are shown. Nuclear depth bombs may be held on ships at any of the ports shown. The key manufacturing sites are discussed in the article

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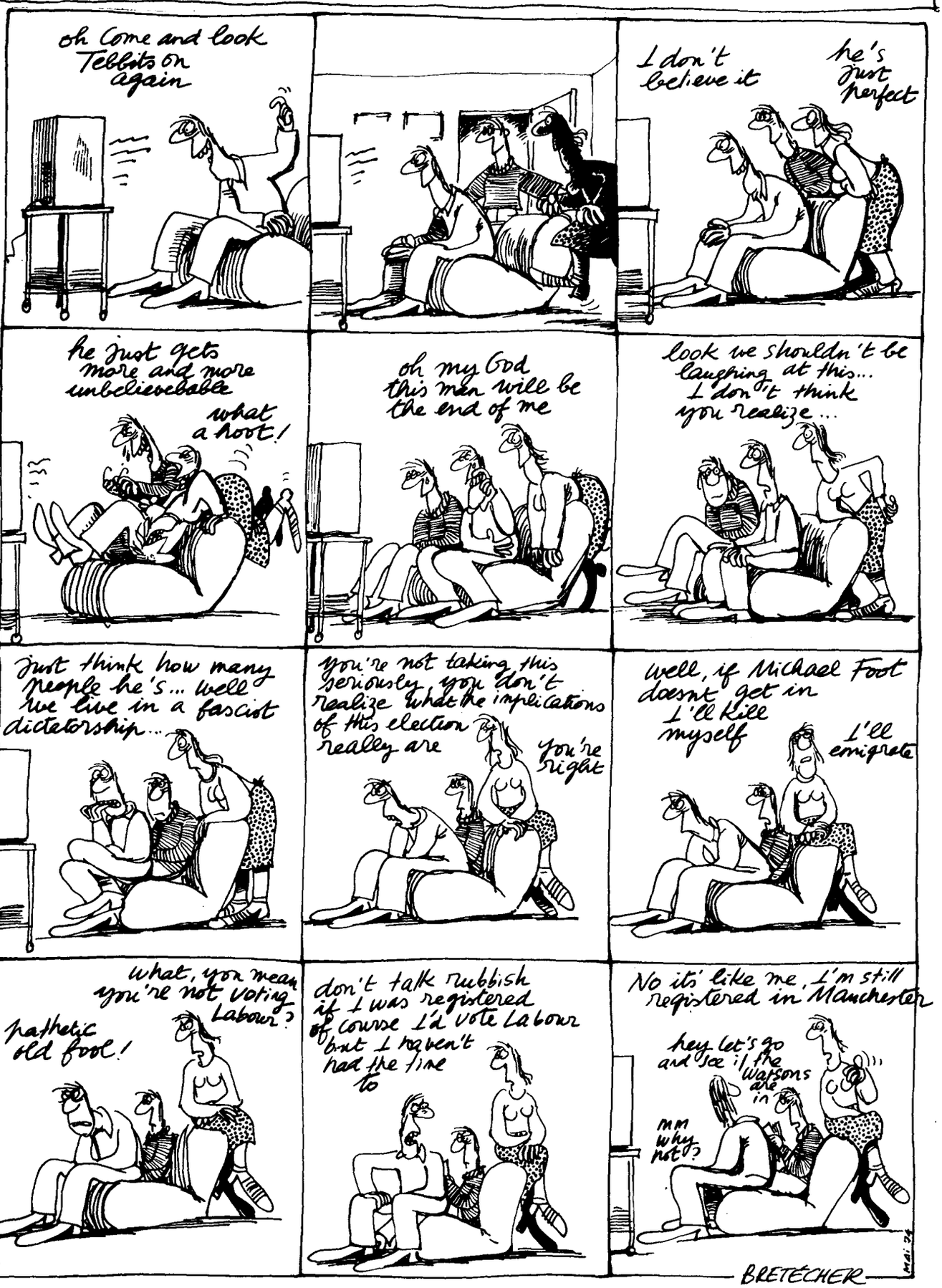
BRETECHER

YOUR VOTE COUNTS


oh Come and look Tebbits on again
I don't believe it
he's just perfect
he just gets more and more unbelievebable
what a hoot!
oh my God this man will be the end of me
look we shouldn't be laughing at this... I don't think you realize...
just think how many people he's... well we live in a fascist dictatorship...
you're not taking this seriously you don't realize what the implications of this election really are
you're right
well, if Michael Foot doesnt get in I'll kill myself
I'll emigrate
what, you mean you're not voting Labour?
pathetic old fool!
don't talk rubbish if I was registered of course I'd vote Labour but I haven't had the time to
No its' like me, I'm still registered in Manchester
hey let's go and see if the Watsons are in
mm why not?
BRETECHER
mai 79

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LETTERS

What's your game?

Andy Aiers, London N16

When my eyes lit on page 11 of the *New Statesman* of 27 May and stared transfixed for all of a minute at the Aims of Industry advert, my mind dredged up three implausible explanations of its inexplicable appearance:

a) The *New Statesman* is more hard up than we think and has decided to try its hand at the 'oldest profession in the world'.

b) It is generously offering its space to a renegade member of the Old Boys' Club on the principle that Once a Socialist Always a Socialist. (Mr Rosewell is really quite a good chap – after all, we've all moved a little bit that way in the last few years.)

c) It's a joke designed to fill the letter columns the week after.

Whatever the reason, I hope the *New Statesman* can make an unequivocal gesture to its loyal readership to show that it hasn't completely lost its marbles.

Hypnotised?

Dora Russell, Penzance

I was so shocked at the election issue of the *New Statesman* with Mrs Thatcher as Queen Victoria and long disquisitions on Victorian values (*NS* 27 May) that I find it difficult to express my anger and dismay.

To be obsessed by an opponent and riveted to the spot by her basilisk eye is not conducive to attack and victory. Your front cover should have shown a Michael Foot Rampant with up-lifted walking stick browbeating a cowed Brian Walden, while an enlarged and ferocious terrier set about his other enemies.

In the old days, Unity Theatre wasted so much time on satirising the Cliveden set that it forgot to present the alternative in ways that could bring support and consent. The Labour manifesto does at least say 'be positive'.

In such dangerous times, courage and plain speaking, rather than subtlety, are in order. How pompous and gentlemanly we have all become! Dr Owen is allowed to say, without rebuke, that Michael Foot is unfit to be a Prime Minister; but Mr Healey must not open his mouth to indicate something similar about Mrs Thatcher, because she obviously enjoys the excitement of war. Since there are many like her in the country, of all classes, who are imperialist and bellicose, she can continue to hoodwink them as she implements her purpose of reducing them to the condition of sycophants and slaves.

Against tactical voting

Jane Linden, Bath Constituency Labour Party

How pleasant it must be writing editorials (*NS* 27 May) as the darling buds of May burst in Lincoln's Inn Fields. So we should all vote Liberal in Bath. Somehow Bath's SDP candidate for the Alliance might find that disturbing. Bath Labour Party finds it disturbing too.

A little spin in the armchair and we should all vote Alliance. An agonising decision. Another little spin and perhaps we should vote for our deliquescent Tory, Chris Patten. After all he stands more chance of stopping Thatcher's final solution than the SDP newspaper tiger who opposes him. Patten even alleges that he's in the Tory Party.

Unfortunately for those of us in Bath who can't enjoy the pleasures of armchair socialism, because we're so busy clawing back the Alliance vote, your editorial is misguided and pretentious. In the May District Elections we polled the second highest number of votes cast, and the Alliance made no gains despite desperate canvassing efforts. If the tactical voter wants an alternative to the Tories, then in Bath that alternative is Labour.

Next time you write about Bath get your facts straight. Let's be quite clear; the Claret and Chips brigade are traitors to socialism who have divided the opposition to Toryism. You are encouraging that division to continue.

Ed: The darling buds burst unseen by us; grim economic reality forced us from fair Lincoln's Inn Fields to the dusty streets of Clerkenwell over six months ago.

David J. Willis, St Austell, Cornwall

When I first heard about your editorial in the 27 May edition my first instinct was to cancel my trial subscription, but being a fair-minded person I waited until my own copy arrived which it did today – several days late.

On reflection I still regard the article as extremely offensive, but because of your previous high standards and other very good items in the paper I have delayed any final decision.

If however you have helped create the bandwagon by which the Alliance is revived and Labour sabotaged then you will undoubtedly lose my support and that of many others.

The replacement of Labour by the SDP-dominated Alliance would be unmitigated disaster for British democracy and a great tragedy. Most of the SDP's ideas are identical to those of the Tories although up until the election they were careful to keep a veneer of smooth respectability over them. The vicious personal abuse, especially by the odious David Owen, has even destroyed that facade.

I found the seats where you said Labour voters should act tactically should be treated with a pinch of salt. South East Cornwall is hardly a marginal Tory seat and in fact the boundary changes should mean that Labour's potential vote is greatly increased and we could easily finish at least second.

Finally: when have you ever known a Liberal or SDP spokesman urge his supporters to vote tactically to help Labour oust the Tories?

A miner's life

David Douglass, Doncaster

One would have thought that after the way in which my book *A Miner's Life* highlights and exposes the Coal Board's attempts to 'whitewash the coal', their response (Letters 20 May) to Anne Smith's review of the book would have been something better than more of the same coat of gloss.

Perhaps Mr Kirk hasn't actually read the book. He will find our response quite adequate to answer his Santa's Grotto image of the coal face being a simple matter of 'moving a lever'.

'. . . it is true that the vast majority of coal is cut by machinery . . . (but) the number of men on a 'stable' face involved in the cutting operation is only nine . . . *seventeen* will be shovelling, blasting, boring, hammering home supports and toiling in much the same fashion as on a conventional handfilled face' (*A Miner's Life*, pp 18 & 19).

We didn't say *all* of the coalfaces were little different than in the days of D. H. Lawrence's father; we said *some* were and actually specified the last figures available to us before publication.

The most misleading part of Mr Kirk's reply is the magical quality of the 'chocks' in supporting the roof. It is true of course that hydraulic chocks are a wonderful method of roof support, but to pretend that the earth is outwitted by them is often untrue. To give one simple example: if the roof collapses and leaves a cavity of ten feet above the chock, then the roof support becomes redundant and the men must timber the cavity in the traditional method with wood tree trunks and props.

The pit, as we say, is still the pit, and no amount of gloss or magical 'levers' has changed that.

No blue-eyed blonde

Amanda Devon, London N19

Apropos Angela Carter's article 'Masochism for the Masses' (*NS* 3 June) and the subject of Margaret Thatcher's appearance: Mrs Thatcher's 'blonde' (dyed) 'immaculate hair' is one thing, but her 'steel blue eyes' quite another, unless the reference is to her blue eye shadow, carefully applied to make blue what are in fact rather ordinary, muddy-brown eyes. Mrs Thatcher's posture and expression, together with her applied camouflage (including her voice), give an impression which seems as though it *ought* to include steel blue eyes, but it is a sham, like much else about her political persona.

A wider vision

M. C. Kelly, London SW19

Reading Jean Stead's letter (*NS* 20 May) I finally understood what was meant when someone said that socialism instils into people what it should be liberating them from. Feminism, too, it seems.

I don't suppose it occurred to Ms Stead (or the other peculiarly callous correspondents on this issue) that some men do not want to have to be 'masculine' any more than some women want to be 'feminine'. Or that some women have always questioned being called irrational by men (and some feminists). Or that some men have always cried and wondered why they were despised for it by women and other men. It may, of course, be something to do with not being 'secure enough in their masculinity' (I'm sure male readers will look forward to Ms Stead's forthcoming article, 'Rules for Proper Gentlemen', to find out what on earth she means, because I certainly don't know.)

In fact all sorts of men and women have always been confused about reason, emotion, and other things, and they generally feel a sick churning in the stomach when they are told they must fit into someone else's social filing cabinet and stay there. I wonder how much longer we must act out our 'historic roles' for various radical elites until that 'great break in human history' so prominent in left-wing ideology.

It seems that most left politics today is little more than trench warfare – everyone dug in deep and not sticking their head above the parapet in case of being shot at.

I really do think that socialists ought to pursue altruism and a 'common humanity' because, if they don't, who else will?

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David Edgar

Conservative contradictions

The Politics of Thatcherism
STUART HALL and MARTIN JACQUES
Lawrence and Wishart in association with Marxism Today £12.50 & £4.95
Thatcher's Britain: A Guide to the Ruins
New Socialist and Pluto Press £1.50

Margaret Thatcher – and the 'ism' which bears her name – have challenged two of the holiest unspoken assumptions of post-war British politics. The first is that there is a kind of centrifugal force which inevitably drags all governments away from the wilder reaches of their manifestoes towards 'the centre'. The second is that major social-democratic reforms – whether in the field of industrial ownership, the welfare state or educational policy – can be assumed to be safe once achieved. Put another way, no-one who achieved adulthood after 1945 (now the vast majority of the population) has living experience of a government which actually intends to fulfil its promises, particularly when those promises consist in large part of returning questions supposedly long since settled to the centre of the political stage.

This sense of disbelief that our worst nightmares are actually coming true (remember how *Edward Heath* was dubbed 'the most reactionary Prime Minister since the war', or this century, or ever?) is the starting point of *Marxism Today*'s elegant and rigorous selection of essays, most of which were originally published in the early period of the Thatcher Government. As Martin Jacques puts it, 'Thatcherism has changed the face of British politics. In 1979, many on the left, and elsewhere, did not believe it would happen. It has happened. And, by and large, it has taken the left by surprise and left it in a state of shock.' Or, as Stuart Hall argues, the greatest mistake the Left could make would be to regard Thatcherism merely as the latest form of contemporary Toryism, 'only a name for the same phenomenon: the permanent, unchanging shape of reactionary ideas'.

In place of this mechanical and economistic view, Hall and Jacques (and their co-contributors) define a New Toryism, nurtured in the seed-bed of the Fringe Right of the late Sixties and early Seventies, which has grasped the opportunity of the collapse of the social-democratic consensus to seize the commanding heights of the political economy. It has managed to do so by presenting to a confused and disillusioned public 'a particularly rich mix' of neo-liberal anti-statism and no-nonsense, authoritarian populism on social issues like race, law and order, education and the family. And, as Stuart Hall points out, this two-pronged ideological posture – economically libertarian but socially repressive (shorthanded by Andrew Gamble as the 'Free Market/Strong State' equation) has been so staggeringly successful precisely because it has been based on a kind of popular consent.

The fact that so much of this seems like common sense is proof of the success of *Marxism Today* (not alone, but way ahead of the pack) in anatomising Thatcherism in the immediate wake of her victory, at a time when many on the Left did indeed see the lady as no more than Ted Heath in skirts. That said, it must be pointed out that the book concentrates much more on the neo-liberal side of the Thatcherite compound (there are excellent articles on economic and welfare policy, Trade Union legislation and the Health Service) than on its social-authoritarian elements. Further, the book does not seriously entertain the notion that, however complementary they may appear, the two sides of the equation might not, logically, add up at all; and that, since 1979, there might have been a slow but significant shift from one side of it to the other.

It is easy to see why the theoretical contradiction between economic individualism and social collectivism might not seem, in practice, to be very significant. First, as both Ian Gough and Tony Lane argue, many current Tory obsessions can be expressed in both vocabularies, and it could well be merely a matter of rhetorical convenience when, on Monday, Conservative spokesmen attack the coercive nature of the closed shop, or the inflationary consequences of high social security spending, while on Tuesday they choose to rail against worker indiscipline or the socially corrosive effects of welfare dependency. Second, as both Gamble and Hall have pointed out at length elsewhere, Friedmanite libertarianism can be seen to lead quite directly to the Strong State in a number of ways: recession breeds resistance, implying harsher policing; structural unemployment fuels the pressure for 'reducing the scale of the problem' by encouraging blacks to 'go home'; welfare cuts require women to return to the home to take up the slack; and so on.

Finally, it could be argued that Mrs Thatcher, convictions or no, is at root an *instinctive* politician, and that the logical conflict between individual liberty and collective discipline which has, for example, torn the American Right apart for the last 40 years, is more or less irrelevant to an ideology that can summed up in a phrase as slippery and bland as 'Victorian Values'.

But there are, I think, a number of reasons why the individualist/collective dichotomy should not be seen as a merely academic question. The first is that a growing number of Tories themselves do not see it in that light. Indeed, behind the well-publicised mists of the wet-dry debate, another row has been merrily simmering within the Thatcher ranks, between (on the one hand) the die-hard apostles of Friedman and Hayek, and (on the other) the disciples of the Peterhouse School of High Tory aca-

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demics, who regard neo-liberalism with the deepest hostility. Popularised by journalists like Peregrine Worsthorne and academics like Roger Scruton, the Peterhouse Line (that free market liberalism is, in Scruton's words, no less than 'the principal *enemy* of Conservatism') has already eaten away at the Conservatives' libertarian rhetoric and consigned Friedmanite groups like the Freedom Association to the furthest fringes of the party.

Further, the growth of an anti-liberal lobby on the Tory Right – expressing its views in increasingly nationalistic and even mystical terms – has already borne more than rhetorical fruit. There could of course be no conceivable market justification for the retaking of the Falklands, a lame penguin if ever there was one; but a more important question is what the Tories would have done had the Falklands *not* been invaded, a question which can be answered in part by remembering what they were in fact up to on or about late March 1982. On the 11th of the month, the Metropolitan Police had issued their notorious 'racial' crime statistics, in a naked attempt to undermine the recommendations of the Scarman Report, and in the ensuing fortnight the collectivist Tory Right emerged, baying for blood (some of it Willie Whitelaw's), with the result that Government Ministers (including Mrs Thatcher herself) were provoked into an amazing aria of disciplinary rhetoric, much of it attacking the 'permissive claptrap' of the post-war era and echoing, in large part, the authoritarian arguments of Peterhouse popularisers like George Gale and Edward Norman in the immediate aftermath of the riots of the summer before.

In other words, *without the Falklands*, the growing pressure for right-authoritarian solutions in the domestic sphere could well have proceeded on an uninterrupted and upward trajectory, and the call (for example) for a strategy of repatriation might not have been restricted to the backbench bootboys like Harvey Proctor or, indeed, to the columns of the *Salisbury Review* (ed: R. Scruton; line: Peterhouse Pure). It is one of the lacunae of the *Marxism Today* book that the word 'riot' appears but once, and then in a bracket, and the word 'Toxteth' not at all. In his essay on the Falklands, Eric Hobsbawm remarks that 'desperate governments of the right will try anything'. Since last June, the Thatcher Government has not been desperate at all, and its remarkably soft manifesto (on social questions at least) is a measure – and a result – of its smug self-confidence. When the transparency of the 'recovery' becomes clear, when the social collapse of the inner cities becomes as palpable again as it was in the summer of 1981, things could look very different.

All of this said, *The Politics of Thatcherism* contains enough insights to fill a Sunday newspaper for a year, and the volume is an impressive monument to the heartening success of the journal that gave it birth. And although the book does not dwell a great deal on the question of the fightback, both Stuart Hall's and Jon Bloomfield's articles present in clear and vigorous terms the need for the Labour Movement to find a new relationship with the myriad social movements and campaigns – from black defence groups to the women of Greenham Common – that have provided so much of the energy of the struggle against Thatcherism since May 1979. In conjunction with *New Socialist*'s zippy travelogue of *Thatcher's Britain* (replete both with quotations and the statistics to demolish them), *The Politics of Thatcherism* will prove either a sadly useful graveside companion or, God willing, a definitive obituary. □

PROPAGANDA
Jonathan Mirsky

No bodies

The Yellow Rainmakers: Are Chemical Weapons Being Used in SE Asia?
GRANT EVANS *NLB* £15 *Verso* £3.95

Bruce Kent's fellow Catholic, William Rees-Mogg, late editor of *The Times* and chairman of the Arts Council, believes that the USSR has used biochemical weapons, or 'yellow rain', against its enemies in South-East Asia and Afghanistan. This belief allows him to tick Kent off; the use of mycotoxins 'seems to me', Rees-Mogg wrote recently in the *Guardian*, 'to confirm, in a horrifying way, the fears of those who did not believe the Soviet Union would honour any disarmament agreement which lacked clear rules for inspection'. Rees-Mogg charged Kent with dragging us down 'the road to appeasement (which) is the road to war.'

What is Rees-Mogg's evidence? *The Wall Street Journal*. 'I believe these allegations are clearly proved.' Then Rees-Mogg delivers what must have seemed to him the deathblow: 'Biological weapons are a parallel to nuclear weapons.' There! So much for CND.

I hope that when Rees-Mogg was running *The Times* he expected a bit more digging from his reporters before they yomped over their targets. He might have noticed a piece in the *Observer* of 20 September 1981 by my colleague Peter Pringle, pointing out that T2 mycotoxin, which the US claimed only the Russians possessed, is available by post to anyone with ten pounds and can, therefore, easily be used to fake evidence.

A year later, on 6 March 1982, Pringle wrote again, quoting the Australian Defence Ministry's conclusion on the US 'smoking gun', actual samples, Washington claimed, of the stuff that was killing 'thousands' of Indochinese. The samples are 'fakes', said the Australians, and in any event were not toxic.

In case Rees-Mogg missed those and other reports, they are summed up, bolstered by much else, in Grant Evans's scrupulous investigative report. If Rees-Mogg is a good fellow (after all, he said it was OK with him for Kent to run CND) he will apologise to CND's leader. Evans, an Australian sociologist, demonstrates that from the start, in 1979, the US evidence for 'yellow rain' has been weak. It arose from Washington's rage at its defeat by Hanoi and turned into an obsession to show the inhumanity of the victors. The problem was to prove how unspeakable Hanoi and its Soviet bankrollers are without reminding everyone of the war crimes perpetrated by Saigon and its US bank-rollers only a few years before.

The search for proof of Soviet inhumanity began in 1979. Vietnam had invaded Kampuchea and the Americans were hoping that this new Indochinese war might erase memories of the recently concluded one, and permit the US to identify a new aggressor. By November 1981, the *Wall Street Journal*, Rees-Mogg's mentor, was claiming, 'Except to the willingly obtuse, the evidence is conclusive. The Soviets . . . have used these . . . warfare agents in Cambodia, Laos, and Afghanistan.' Like Rees-Mogg, the State Department was impressed by the *Journal*'s confidence, and in March 1982 Secretary of State Haig's report to Congress was alleging that there were thousands of victims of Soviet poisons in South-East Asia.

After a close reading of the US reports and Washington hearings, examination of the biological monographs, and interviews with scientists, US witnesses, and refugees, Evans's conclusion is stark: there is no foundation whatever for the US 'evidence'. Washington's claims are based on three kinds of rumours, which Evans unpicks. Some evidence is based on refugee memories of US bombing. This the Americans have had to sift out of their reports. Other rumours arose from the determination of the CIA's ex-mercenaries in Indochina to rekindle Washington's support for their lost cause. Finally, there are the planted rumours; various US agencies have 'reminded' refugees of the 'yellow rain' which caused their ailments, which, Evans suggests, are in fact endemic to the area. This he concludes from investigation in South-East Asia, including a trip to the areas in which 'thousands' died. Not a single cadaver, much less bit of tissue, has been produced to support the American claims. As the Australian defence experts concluded, the 'toxins' are fakes and not deadly.

Since Rees-Mogg feels horror at the use of gases against 'defenceless populations', he will profit from other Evans data. Up to 1969 alone, the US dropped 6,000 tons of 'non-lethal' riot control gases on Vietnam. The concentrations *were* lethal. A Canadian doctor working in a South Vietnamese hospital observed a 10 per cent fatality rate for adults, and 90 per cent for children. Interestingly, the Communists used to accuse the Americans of using 'yellow rain' in Laos. Evans doesn't believe that one either. □

Among this week's contributors:

DAVID EDGAR's new play *Maydays* will be opening at the Barbican in October.

JONATHAN MIRSKY is the *Observer*'s China specialist.

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Pillar and Tinderbox: The Greek Press and the Dictatorship

ROBERT MCDONALD *Marion Boyars* £12.50

For most of this century, Athens has had a thriving and combative press. A wide range of titles, combined with a vigorous and unashamed partisanship, have made newspapers an essential part of political life – often scurrilous and profane but acting generally as a force for pluralism. Not even the widespread business of government subsidy has been able to enforce any real conformism. Publishers are adept at swift changes of name or ownership in order to escape libel laws, censors and other enemies of the trade.

It was natural that the group of demented colonels who seized power in April 1967 would make the press their first target. But they could never quite decide whether they wanted to corrupt the papers on to their own side, to close them down, or to use them as a showcase to impress other Europeans and Americans. As a result, a clumsy and brutish mixture of policies was applied. Some papers were closed. Others were bought up. All were censored, and none were permitted to print white space to demonstrate the fact. Foreign newspapers were, with some exceptions, allowed to circulate freely – a policy that conned a few visiting politicians. But Greek Cypriot papers intelligible to the mass of the population were strictly forbidden. Robert McDonald's book is an account of the ingenuity of the press in getting round the thick-headed regime; of the sad readiness of some editors and publishers to take advantage of their competitors' absence; of the ways in which exiled editors and publishers like Helen Vlachou became important figureheads of the resistance.

It's a racy tale, with some useful lessons. One is pleased to find that the junta did take note of the protests of foreign journalists – even though it pretended not to. The BBC Greek Service comes out well, as does the *Deutschewelle* radio station. Finally, of course, like all censors, the junta started to bully even the conservatives who were sympathetic to it. I remember the day they closed *Vradyni*, the right-wing evening paper. It was a sign that the dictators were in their desperate final throes; unable to listen to anybody but their closest flatterers and toadies. The other day, somebody walked into the offices of George Athanassiades, publisher of *Vradyni*, and shot him dead. It would be interesting to find out who.

Christopher Hitchens

My Russia

PETER USTINOV *Macmillan* £10.95

Peter Ustinov's book on Russia is, perhaps predictably, an idiosyncratic work. It looks like a coffee-table book. It is beautifully produced, full of pictures and over-written. In it, he presents us with a child's history of Russia. It is Russian history told, from start to finish (from the Vikings to Brezhnev), as the history of good Tsars and bad Tsars, great men and great deeds. Peter Ustinov is not a historian. He shows no understanding of the way the life of the Russian people has changed and developed and his book is full of inaccuracies, some of them serious.

Peter Ustinov gives us all this history in order to put across a political message. His argument is that Russia's actions today can only be understood in terms of her past. Russia is a vast sprawling state, with wide frontiers open to attack on all sides. Her history has been a permanent struggle to keep out invaders, especially from the more economically developed countries of Western Europe. Almost everybody has invaded Russia – the Tatars in the 13th century; the Poles in the 16th century; the Swedes in the 17th century; the French in 1812; the Germans in 1914-18; the British, the French, the Americans, the Japanese and the Greeks in 1919; the Germans again in 1941. The result is that Russia is paranoid about the security of her frontiers. Her thinking is dominated by fear of attack from outside. Her concern is to defend herself, not to turn outwards and embark on world conquest. Peter Ustinov's work is a plea for the West to understand this in its negotiations with Russia.

This is a good argument and a useful corrective to the Cold War slogans again being brandished by politicians and academics in both the US and Britain. Unfortunately, Peter Ustinov's presentation of it is marred both by the superficiality of his historical narrative and by his tendency to lapse into apologetics. The result is that his message does not carry conviction. Peter Ustinov is an entertainer, not a scholar, and he has taken on a subject that is too much for him.

Olga Semenova

The Education of a Gardener

RUSSELL PAGE *Collins* £12.95

The rectangular lawns, narrow flower beds and thin straight paths which flick past suburban train windows testify to Russell Page's belief that the green-fingered British 'have no strong feeling for design'. His own genius as a creator of gardens both here and abroad has been to reconcile the art of planting with the quite separate art of design. A Page garden reflects the particularities of the site, exhibits a firm underlying structure ('good bones'), and inclines towards simplicity, balancing vision ('To plant a tree is to give body and life to one's dream of a better world') with practicality. Ironically, *The Education of a Gardener*, originally published in 1962 and at last re-issued, is badly designed with a rambling text and dismal photographs. It remains, however, the best book available on garden design and its principles are applicable to the humblest patch.

Page, who has worked for the famous without becoming fashionable, reveals little or nothing of his own life or character. The nearest we get to the man is when he casually mentions, while describing the small garden he envisages for himself (no herbaceous borders, no rose garden, no formal layout), being forced to adopt a life-long discipline 'so that eagerness may not turn into ill-temper and hopes not well based founder in useless despair'.

Alan Hurst

This Quiet Dust & Other Writings

WILLIAM STYRON *Cape* £12.50

As a novelist, William Styron has never been less than interesting. Surprising, then, that *This Quiet Dust* – selected from 30 years of non-fictional writing – proves generally unprovoking on a variety of topics in a variety of forms (chiefly the book review). This despite the contents being largely devoted to subjects of special concern to the author: the South, slavery, prison and military life, capital punishment, favourite writers. Styron brings to books on these matters a degree of knowledge that equips him splendidly to detect shortcomings. Unfortunately, this capability is rarely apparent here. The reviews chosen usually deal with books Styron particularly admires and spend rather too much time on praise and agreement, rather too little on comment and qualification. A similar tendency, intensified, vitiates the brief portraits of (mostly deceased) literary friends and acquaintances: they have the embarrassing air of fulsome graveside eulogies. Elsewhere, assorted introductions, addresses and scraps of autobiography are simply too insubstantial to be of much value.

Styron is, however, an impressive essayist, notably in an excellent travel piece, 'Down the Nile', and, above all, the polemical trilogy concerned with Benjamin Reid, a murderer condemned to the electric chair in 1957. He had been four years on death row – while appeals were heard and rejected – when Styron joined the campaign to save him. The first two essays were instrumental in Reid having his sentence commuted to life imprisonment and then being granted the hope of eventual parole. The third relates an unhappy ending: mere days before release on parole into Styron's custody, Reid absconded from gaol to commit offences, including abduction and rape, that led to a further 10-15 year sentence. Sadly, work of this calibre is the exception in *This Quiet Dust;* the rule is ephemera that, while competent enough (and beautifully written), have made the transition to hard-covers principally on the strength of Styron's name.

David Montrose

A Portrait of Charles Lamb

DAVID CECIL *Constable* £9.95

David Cecil admits that he is more sympathetic intellectually to Jane Austen than to any other writer. Charles Lamb whose 'friends meant as much to him as literature' and who 'found a charm in everything connected with play-going' perhaps comes next. Certainly this portrait is as elegantly and sensitively executed as his delightful one of Jane Austen.

Poor Lamb, haunted by a family madness which possessed his sister, Mary, and made her butcher their mother, was reluctant to marry and so pass on the blight of the family tree. He was content to bury himself in the administrative corridors of East India House, and pursue a minor literary life, in order to care for the more than occasionally demented Mary. At a time when he himself was deteriorating into a middle-aged drunkard, and Mary was experiencing a luminous patch of sanity, they produced between them *Tales from Shakespeare*.

David Cecil tells Lamb's story with insight and great compassion. He has gathered a wealth of illustrations of Lamb's background and particularly of the London which he loved, 'the lighted shops of the Strand and Fleet Street . . . London itself a pantomime and a masquerade'. Lamb joined a glittering circle of literary friends. He dined with the artist Haydon and the poet Keats. He knew Coleridge and Wordsworth whom he mocked for saying that he would have no difficulty in writing like Shakespeare, if he had a mind to try it. Lamb commented, 'It is clear, then, nothing is wanting but the mind.'

Lamb's greatest achievement was his *Elia* essays, and, as David Cecil rightly says, 'irony pervades the Elia mood'. Such an ironic spirit would have enabled Lamb to withstand Carlyle's characteristically bitter reminiscences. He considered Lamb almost mad: 'A more pitiful, ricketty, gasping, stammering Tomfool I do not know'. And with what irony of tone would Lamb have greeted the fact that Mary did not seem to miss him after his death.

David Cecil has created a small masterpiece, displaying all the humaneness which typified the Oxford English School of his own professorial days.

Brian Martin

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PAPERBACKS
Alan Brien

Another country

IF THE PAST really is a foreign country, as L. P. Hartley insisted in the opening lines of *The Go-Between*, apparently rather surprised to discover that they did things differently there, what extra revelations, horrors and shocks must await home-based explorers of both space and time!

The latest batch of travel paperbacks, which girdle the globe and span the centuries, cannot help but make honest readers grateful that they are experiencing these trips only on the page instead of in the flesh. Even the threat of living through Mrs Thatcher's alternative future, itself a rose-coloured remembrance of things past, a kind of Victorian Weimar, seems preferable to actually sharing some of the self-chosen endurance tests imposed on these reporters.

Of the score or so I sampled, perhaps the most deeply rewarding was John Lincoln's **One Man's Mexico** (Century, £4.95). Not only does he chronicle his determined investigations of this violent, mysterious and dramatic land with the alert eye and impertinent curiosity of a born novelist but he also inks in the history of its people with a graphic, outspoken rhetoric. Everyone knows the appalling facts of the Spanish conquest, but few of us appreciate that the US war of 1847 inflicted almost equally traumatic scars on the Mexican psyche.

'One of the most unjust and rapacious wars in history,' he calls it, noting that as the price of victory the North Americans seized almost half of Mexico's territory.

A striking sidelight on South American psychology is provided by W. H. Hudson's **Far Away and Long Ago** (Eland, £3.95), the deceptively wide-eyed, and almost naive, account of an Argentinian childhood, as a youngster of Devonian ancestry grows up on the pampas in the 1850s. 'One cannot tell how this fellow gets his effects', grumbled Joseph Conrad. 'He writes as the grass grows.' Despite this gentle, detailed, apparently effortless prose, studded with observations of flowers and insects, animals and weather, a vivid and often frightening picture emerges of a people who cherish their own savage identification with nature. No one who is led along into its idyllic, Eden-like world will easily forget such sudden, barbaric images as the gaucho slaughtering the bull.

No one could claim that Ibn Battuta's **Travels in Asia and Africa** (Routledge, £5.95) is a consistently enthralling read. Not for him the vivid phrase, the startling image, the carefully integrated anecdote, but then he is dictating the account of his 75,000 mile itinerary, beginning in Tangier, to Mecca, Syria and Egypt, Constantinople and India, Ceylon and China, as an old man in Fez at the end of the 14th century. This is genuinely another country of time about which we know little, and every precise observation about food and prices, clothing and customs, diseases and cures, transport and entertainment, is as rare and valuable as an antique in a museum. Here is one of the very few voices of a real survivor which has lasted 600 years.

Ibn Battuta's careful jottings provide an interesting example of the persistence of travellers' tales through the centuries. He praises the severity towards evil-doers of a Syrian governor, Sindamur, citing his ripping open of an officer accused of taking drinks without payment, on the complaint of a poor woman, and finding milk spilling out of the entrails. The same story, this time as an example of cruel practices, is retailed as happening in the 1830s by Robert Curzon in **Visits to Monasteries in the Levant** (Century, £5.95). Curzon's travels, somewhat, I suspect, buffed up to compete with the success of Kinglake's *Eothen*, are full of incident and excitement, button-holing us from page to page, and are worth the price if only for his horrifyingly realistic account of the mass suffocation of rioting worshippers in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

In **Naples '44** (Eland, £3.95), Norman Lewis, novelist, travel writer, supremely intelligent and polemical journalist – his article in the *Sunday Times* on genocide in Brazil was one of those few pieces of newspaper campaigning that actually saved lives – offers us his first venture into writing. It is a diary he kept for a year while serving with the Field Security Services during the aftermath of the US Army invasion of Italy. This account is so packed with eye-witness anecdotes, character sketches, observations of everything that lives and breathes around him that, by contrast, Heller's *Catch 22* seems soberly understated.

Martha Gellhorn's **Travels with Myself and Another** (Eland, £3.95) and Gavin Young's **Slow Boats to China** (Penguin, £2.95) both illustrate Ms Gellhorn's dictum, 'the only aspect of our travels that is guaranteed to hold an audience is disaster'. Here are two superb reporters taking all the risks, trusting all the wrong people, enduring everything we would have fled from after five minutes, and yet triumphing in the end. Often, their lives are in imminent danger, though we only notice that later. Instead, we remember more his breakfast on the ferry boat from Cyprus to Alexandria – 'a kind of fried egg cake, quite hard, and reinforced by a network of coarse black human hairs cooked into its fabric, as wiremesh is embedded into concrete' – or her attacks by dive-bombing tse-tse flies.

The Rough Guide to Spain (Routledge, £3.95) by Ellingham and Fisher is bang up to date, extremely direct and colloquial, giving just the sort of information you would write to a friend. Even better in some ways is Ken Welsh's **Hitch-Hiker's Guide to Europe** (Fontana, £2.95), the one down-to-earth, nitty-gritty first-aid I would take to keep myself out of trouble, however I travelled, if I had only a single pocket. □

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FICTION
Richard Deveson

Two birds

King Solomon
ROMAIN GARY
tr. Barbara Wright *Harvill* £7.95

The Polyglots
WILLIAM GERHARDIE *Secker* £7.95

The Facts of Life
ROBERT NYE *Hamish Hamilton* £7.95

The story behind **King Solomon** is much better than the book itself. The novel appeared in France in 1979, the fourth by the writer Emile Ajar, who had dramatically emerged from normal into exceptional invisibility six years earlier. Ajar's first novel was a big success, but no one knew who he was: through third parties the manuscript had reached Paris from Brazil, from where the author later wrote to withdraw from entry for the Renaudot prize. Eventually a Paul Pavlowitch surfaced, saying that he was Ajar – a fact which added much piquancy to the affair, since Pavlowitch was a distant cousin of the more than visible Romain Gary, who had flown fighters in the war, worked for the French foreign service, and written a string of best-sellers which by now were doing him no good with the Parisian critics.

Ajar's books became the runaway hits now, and unflattering reflections on his older relative (who was still publishing novels) were only too easy to cast. But in December 1980, in a final large gesture, Gary shot himself through the head; and a few months later the story was out. Two birds had been killed with one bullet, as Emile Ajar had all along been Gary himself.

This story, told by Gary in an appendix to the present book, left behind it what can now be seen as a wonderful skidmarked trail of farce. Critics who half-suspected funny business when stylistic echoes between Gary and Ajar were turned up, were easily fobbed off by Gary, with the hurt-but-magnanimous line that he had obviously been a great influence on young Pavlowitch (who, incidentally, was conniving at the whole imposture).

Gary actually broke the rules of the Goncourt by winning it twice. He had won it, as Gary, in 1956; now, in the Seventies, as Pavlowitch-'Ajar', he 'refused' it. And he tells another story: ' I met a young woman who had a liaison with Emile. He was a terrific fucker, she said. I hope I didn't disappoint her too much.'

King Solomon is narrated by Jean, a rather clueless young taxi-driver who acts as general helper-out for SOS, a body whose purpose is to spread benevolence, especially to the lonely and old, and which sounds like an unfeasible combination of Amnesty International and Meals on Wheels. SOS is run by Solomon, who at a youthful 84 still hasn't forgiven Cora for her infidelity over 30 years earlier; Cora, merely in her sixties, in turn hasn't forgiven Solomon for his obstinate unforgiveness. Jean eventually brings them back together, though not before undergoing a steamy and intimately described affair with the energetic Cora.

The attractive quality of the book is its colloquial geniality, which can modulate into un-self-pitying bitterness against suffering and old age. But it's also slack and repetitious, and there is a kind of sentimentality in the way it toys with the idea of rejuvenation. Even though Gary's invention of Ajar was, partly, also a search for lost youth, that true story is a lot more exhilarating than this fiction.

WILLIAM Gerhardie's **The Polyglots** was first published in 1925, and this is the third attempt to re-launch it since the war. It is worrying to have to disagree with Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Anthony Powell and Olivia Manning, who have all given it various kinds of praise, but I wonder if it isn't the sort of novel that makes an impression as much because it is different from what has gone before, or because it suggests new possibilities for the future, as because of its intrinsic qualities. The book is a difficult one to characterise without substantial quotation.

Georges Hamlet Alexander Diabologh, an Allied military attaché, falls in with his eccentric Belgian relatives in Japan and Siberia in 1918-20; Uncle Lucy hangs himself wearing Aunt Teresa's camisole and knickers; the hero spends a rapturous night with his silly cousin Sylvia just a few hours after she has married someone else.

But the people and situations, though plentiful and reasonably comical, aren't the essence of the thing. The book is really its tone: a tone akin to camp and to Noël-Coward flippancy, though not quite the same as either; a very distinctive matter of abrupt switches within the paragraph or sentence, from melancholy to bathos, sentiment to absurdity, inflation to the pricking pin. Yet the effect is not to open up deep-lying ironies.

The constant cancelling-out reduces every attitude to mere attitudinising. Even if this is part of the point, we aren't made to care about it; the loss of feeling isn't itself felt. This jewel that glistened when it came out of the sea in 1925 still has its pattern of curious streaks, but it is really only a rather unconventional pebble.

The Facts of Life is a collection of mainly short 'stories' – that is, assorted bits of surrealism, medievalry, science fiction and literary in-jokes. One item begins: 'For instance, Adam Kadmon. Tell you all about him. All about Adam. Adam Kadmon. Start at the beginning. For instance, crickets.' And so on, for 23 occasionally paragraphed pages.

If you like to follow what's going on when you're reading, there are the title story and a couple of others, but then you can also tell that they're pretty slight. □

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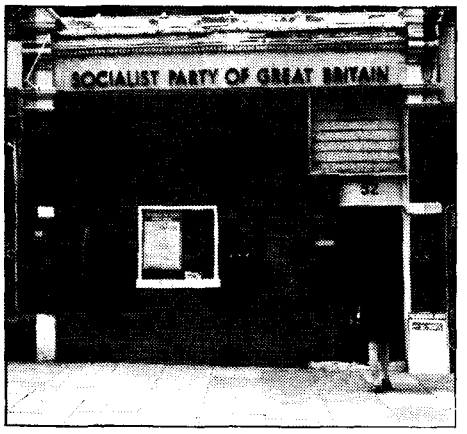
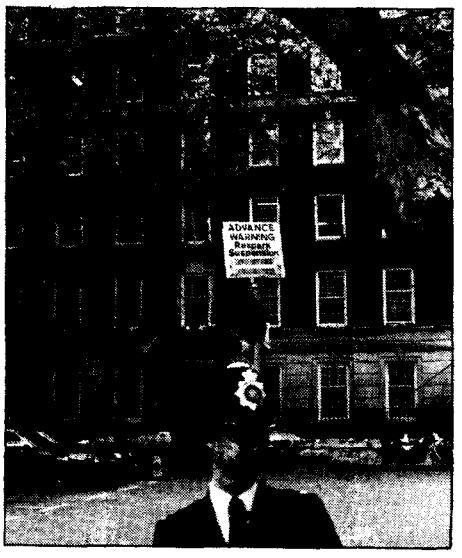
ARCHITECTURE
Jules Lubbock

Secret manifestoes

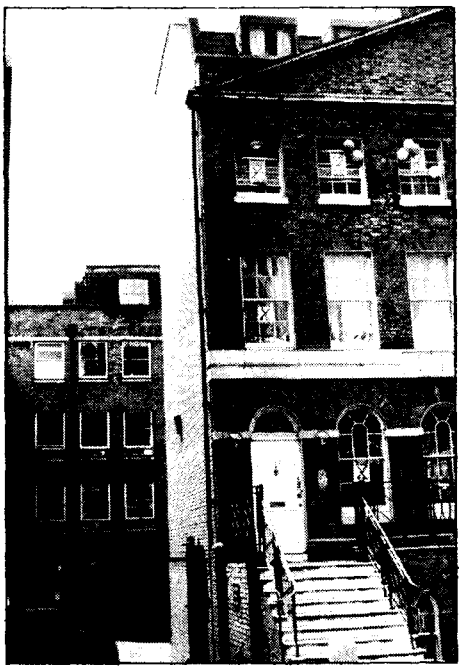
TIME WAS when architecture was the life-blood of politics, when Guelphs and Ghibellines, Whigs and Tories declared their allegiances with capitals and columns, crockets and gables. Grub Street hacks wrote doggerel verses extolling their patrons' country houses, and Pope lampooned them. Wren was hired by the Tories and fired by the Whigs. A cathedral or a temple, swarming with masons for decades on end, reminded the people that bounty was being distributed and the economy stimulated. Now that TV is the mother of the arts facades count for less than faces. Or do they?



Good for the SPGB – the only party with the courage to say who they are, and in tasteful sans-serif lettering. The Ecology Party masquerades behind the Yuk Chuen Chinese Restaurant and the Jearlene Unisex hairdressers. The far left and far right can always be identified by their taste for barricades, wire mesh perimeter fencing and other forms of security (e.g. SWP, CP and, below, the Conservative Party).

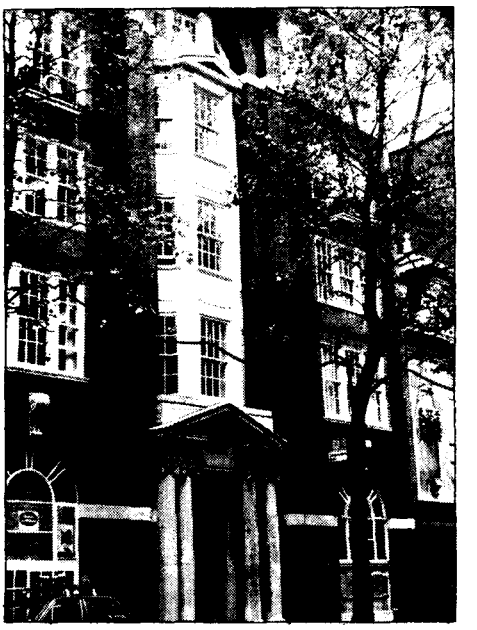


'Very Good Party' in gentrified Islington? Head office of leading firm of building contractors? Third-rate commercial travellers' hotel on the outskirts of Reading? No. Below is where the first Earl of Callaghan (whose portrait in Coronation robes hangs in the hall) shipped the Labour Party when Moss Evans threw it out of Transport House. The Callaghans have been out of luck with their recent

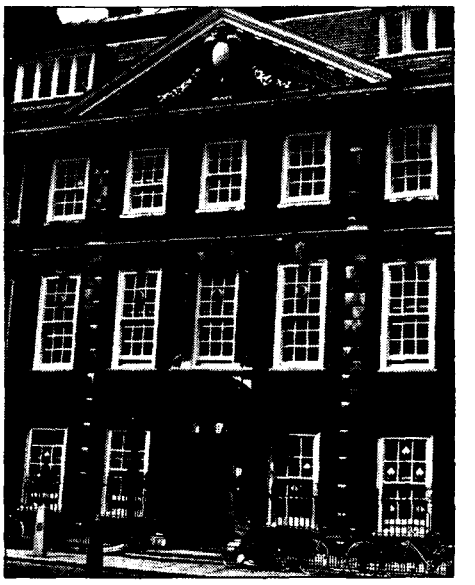


architectural projects (viz. TVam). Bungled rehab. of early 19th-century terrace in Southwark (praised by Pevsner) with sub-developer style offices tacked on the back. Blue-flush in the loos, blush plush on the floors, and repro brass chandeliers in the hall. How can their claim to rebuild Britain be taken seriously? Party workers have made a valiant effort with a plaintive display of balloons, two of which have burst. It is enough to make one weep for the only party to hold out any hope in this most cynical and self-interested of elections.

A sure grasp of architectural symbolism here. Ripe, well-fed and well-endowed curly-haired cherubs symbolising the joys of yesteryear or the fruits of years to come. Wheatsheaves signify fertility, prosperity, and bounty for the poor, at no cost to the rich. Renaissance-style split pediment and Doric triglyphs give the clue; the inscription beneath Gladstone's bust in the hall reads: 'The principle of Conservatism is mistrust of the people qualified by fear: the principle of Liberalism is trust in the people qualified by Prudence.' Quite!



No prizes for the right answer. Pure nostalgia, but Transport House remains a masterpiece of political architecture. Unpretentious late Arts and Crafts, a synthesis of English vernacular and the Ionic – most graceful of all the orders. Bricklaying of this calibre is no longer obtainable. Lots of enjoyably quirky details, but it hangs together as a whole. A radical building, a puritan building, and yet a joyous and unforbidding building – William Morris would have approved. Good views of Whitehall and the Palace of Westminster from the upper floors.



No signs of penny-pinching or fortifications here. The grand style of real old-fashioned paternalist Toryism, of ducal acres and the leader over the water. Well-insured and finely appointed 1904 repro-Restoration town house actually houses the SDP. Note coat of arms, swags, and richly carved pediment. Brickwork the colour of vintage claret. Oak panelling and fragments of the Elgin Marbles in the hall. Commands the prospect of Lord North Street from Smith Square. Good view of Whitehall and Westminster from the rear dormer windows.

So much for the secret architectural manifestoes. But before any more Labour Party members cancel their *NS* subscriptions, thanks to the loyal mole in Walworth Road who put me up to the idea and would give anything to get back to Transport House. Moss Evans take note. □

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FILMS
John Coleman

Golden oldies

Jacques Becker Season
NFT, to 30 June
Octopussy (PG)
Odeon, Leicester Square
The Hunger (18)
ABC Shaftesbury Avenue

'I hate leaving people in a vacuum . . . I can't imagine a character without worrying about the way he lives, his social relationships, and – what's more – the class he belongs to.' So said Jacques Becker in 1957, three years before his untimely death (he was born in 1906), rightly stressing a side of his considerable talent that must have been encouraged by example during the Thirties when he worked as assistant director to Jean Renoir on some ten films and even made brief appearances in a few of them – as the poet in the park in *Boudu* and an English officer in *La Grande Illusion*. Love and friendship, easy abstractions grown stale through imprecise use, are terms refreshed by Becker's own output, one might almost say defined by it: they lie at its heart's core, crystallising in moments that lodge in the memory imperishably. Who could forget ravishingly ripe Signoret in turn-of-the century *Casque d'Or*, cat-sleek with sensuality, golden hair loose in waking morning sunlight as she clasps a bowl of hot coffee at a cottage window, her man (Serge Reggiani in his finest hour or so) lounging in perfect happiness just outside? Or – since friendship only reinforces betrayal – that instant in Becker's last film, *Le Trou*, where alerted guards suddenly invade the cell housing four convicts, through the door and up from the escape tunnel so laboriously dug?

Most will agree that these two are Becker's masterpieces, but none of his 13 films (with the possible exception of the Fernandel vehicle, *Ali Baba et les 40 Voleurs*) is without distinction. He talked of his entomological approach to reality, and it's true that his eye for telling detail, his ear for vivid sound – the shrill filing through a bar in *Le Trou* – are always in evidence, the first notably providing much of the charm of such quotidian Parisian comedies as *Antoine et Antoinette, Edouard et Caroline* and *Rue de l'Estrapade*. But, if he was meticulous in his preparations, in his observation of different social *moeurs* and *milieux* ('Je ne suis pas minutieux, je suis maniaque', he once snapped at a journalist), there is never a sense of over-cool scrutiny or dissection; the world was not his ant-heap: it was a source of images, of fleeting resonances frequently achieving the potency of poetry. Coming as it did between the Old Guard and the New Wavers from *Cahiers du Cinéma*, his career – in all its variety – surely deserves closer study, all the more so at a bleak period in our civilisation when every second film PhD is being devoted to the John Carpenters and Jean-come-latelys of instant cultists. As a postscript to this brief celebration of the NFT retrospective, one might note that Becker also made the early French gangster toughie, *Touchez pas au Grisbi*, starring Gabin as a magnificently fastidious big shot, and that the Academy Cinema Three is currently reviving perhaps *the* Gabin classic, Marcel Carné's *Le Jour Se Lève*, with marvellous Arletty and Jules Berry.

Back at the product, the latest Bond caper has just eeled its way into town: **Octopussy**. Without going into the tedious genesis of its title I should maybe point out there are far more than eight lightly-clad women floating round winsome Action Man, Roger Moore. Hopes raised by a credit for George MacDonald Fraser as one of the farrago's three writers are dashed irrevocably when aging 007 drops the quizzical bit for a high moral tone while addressing a renegade Russian general intent on precipitating World War III against the wishes of a Brezhnev-like boss: this peace-loving slant is the sole real oddity in an occasion elsewhere devoted to travelogue chases in or clinging to or hanging from assorted vehicles. Tony (brother of Ridley) Scott's **The Hunger**, Manhattan-based tosh about lesbian and other vampirism with David Bowie, Catherine Deneuve and Susan Sarandon, made me want to slap its chic. □

THEATRE
Benedict Nightingale

Subtractions

King Lear
SHAKESPEARE *Barbican*
The Dining Room
A. R. GURNEY JR *Greenwich*
Men Should Weep
ENA LAMONT STEWART *Stratford East*

The ghost of Nahum Tate, which spent last year rustling round Stratford, has now taken up its spidery residence in the Barbican. Tate, you may recall, was the neo-classical dramatist who 'improved' **King Lear** by saving Cordelia from death, marrying her off to Edgar, and dispatching the old king to a comfy retirement in some damp-free castle in the druidical gin-belt. Until Kean restored the original ending in 1823, Macready the full text in 1838, this was the version of the British theatre's greatest tragedy that held the British stage; and it would, surely, be a monstrous philistine who elected to take as big a backwards somersault as now, in 1983, to rehabilitate the dwarfish *Lear* of 17th- and 18th-century pusillanimity.

Well, no one who saw Adrian Noble's *Doll's House* or *Duchess of Malfi* would possibly think him philistine. Indeed, he may be as promising a young director as our theatre can boast. And yet what he has done to *Lear*, to almost universal acclaim, strikes me as being undeniably in the tradition of the Goths and Vandals, Tartars and Tates. Never mind the cuts, such as denying poor Edmund the chance to repent at the end: worse has occurred with impunity, even at the RSC. Never mind the gratuitous showiness, such as perching Michael Gambon's Lear on a ten-foot-tall birdtable for the start of the storm scene, there to sway and teeter in a light from heaven and a mist billowing up from hell: worse has also occurred in recent times, though not often at the RSC. Never mind Noble's failure to ensure that Gambon reacts with a proper intensity of hurt and pique to Cordelia's supposed treachery at the play's opening. . . .

No, sorry. That I *do* mind, because it is the first symptom of what's to become a fatally unbalanced production. It should warn us that, whatever Shakespeare wrote, Lear's primary relationship is not to be with Cordelia or, for that matter, with any or all of his daughters. For Mr Noble, it is with his Fool, in this instance a white-faced, red-nosed, baggy-trousered, bowler-hatted blend of Grock and Beckett's Estragon played by Antony Sher. Much or most of the evening, this grotesque apparition seems to be everywhere: scuttling across the stage in a gouty hobble; laughing with Lear, cuddling him, playing the dummy to his ventriloquist; scraping the violin he carries, or transforming it into a ukelele for a George Formby imitation; magicking an egg from nowhere, breaking it in two, then using the half-shells to illustrate a lesson on the folly of giving up your crown; whooping, cackling, teasing Sara Kestelman's formidable Goneril, putting on funny voices, snarling out those odd, unsettling verses about Albion coming 'to great confusion', then prancing and clattering around in a red spotlight; and finally, outrageously, being stabbed to death by the demented Lear. It is a brilliant performance, and its brilliance is the trouble. When Sher is there, no one else seems much to matter.

Actually, when he's *not* there, other people and things matter less than they ought; and this is a serious business, since he disappears from the play towards the end of act three. Two more acts are left to be performed, and they culminate in possibly the most painful scene ever written, Lear's lament over the body of the daughter with whom he's just been reconciled. Alice Krige, a warm and caring Cordelia, prepares us for this moment as best she may; Gambon plays it with a bleary simplicity, as of a child groping at unseen, unseeable horrors through a thick mist; and yet the effect is altogether anti-climactic, because the object of his incredulous anguish is the wrong one. If it was Mr Sher's head on Lear's lap, instead of this intrusive girl from France, *then* he and we might have something to cry about.

Let me not dismiss Mr Noble as scatterbrained. Much earnest thought has clearly gone into his interpretation. Lear, it seems,

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squandered time in play, no doubt largely with the Fool. Now he must reject all that. Hence what, I suppose, we're to take as the symbolic destruction of his own self-destructive side, accompanied by the slow growth of wisdom. It's an approach that fits uneasily with the actual character of the Fool, who persistently, indeed heroically tries to din sense into his master; but what's really wrong with it is what's wrong with a lot of Shakespeare production nowadays. In spite (or *because*) of its cleverness, it ends by subtracting more, and more that's essential, than it adds. It emphasises an aspect of the play at the expense of more important ones. Myself, I've seen productions which have brought barely a tenth of Mr Noble's intelligence, imagination and flair to *Lear*, and yet have managed to count for more, both as pictures of suffering and spiritual regeneration and, if you'll forgive so archaic a word, as tragedies. After all, not for 150 years can the play's true pity and terror have been excised so cleanly. In Adrian Noble, unlikely as it may seem, Tate has found his Lyle.

The Dining Room is A. R. Gurney's setting for his exposé-cum-celebration of the Boston brahmins, and, by the end, an eloquent enough symbol of their disappearing manners and mores. Unconnected episode follows unconnected episode, but always around a table that, for all its appearance of antiquity, turns out to have been thrown together in the 1890s. I was intrigued by the procession of bullying patriarchs, put-upon children, bored wives and po-faced servants, but no more than by many another historical oddity or anthropological curiosity, and certainly not as deeply as by **Men Should Weep,** Ena Stewart's grim picture of recession circa 1930. See it before the Election, to make comparisons and whip up your anger, and we'll talk again next week. □

TELEVISION
Hugo Williams

Retablos

FIRST OF the **Makers** (C4) was the Mexican Frida Kahlo (1910-1954), an artist in whom the Muse took a special interest, destroying her as a woman in order to ensure that her short, agonised life should be obsessed with its depiction in paint. When she was 16 a runaway tram crushed the bus she was in, smashing her pelvis and wounding her dreadfully. She began painting in hospital. She met and married the artist Diego Rivera two years later.

The Riveras were far to the Left. They collected pre-Columbian art and *retablos,* the little tin-plate paintings commissioned by the poor to offer at shrines. They wore local costume and their paintings were full of local colour. Diego built a pyramid in their spacious garden, now a museum. Their marriage was stormy but childless. Diego had an affair with Frida's sister and Frida had one with Trotsky. André Breton called and declared her a surrealist, 'a ribbon round a bomb'.

The deadly Breton was interested in the naive (but weid) *retablos* and he encouraged Frida to go ahead with an ever more whimsical symbolism, steering a potentially fine portrait painter away from the world and towards the kind of psychological illustration so beloved by the tele-biographer. Tropical plants transmuted into male and female genitalia. Diego popped out of her eyebrows, symbolising, well, his intrusion into her thoughts. Frida was obsessed with her infertility and surrealism offered all-too-easy access to self-pity: windows open in her chest, vines crawl out, hearts hover in mid-air. A typical image shows Frida dreaming a vine which gets tangled up with the fuse of a bomb: 'Viva Stalin!' she wrote, 'Viva Diego!' Kahlo seems set to become more famous in our time.

Just as the death of Sylvia Plath is to most people more interesting than her poetry, so the broken life of Kahlo is quite fascinating enough in itself to sustain a quick documentary, though this one was far too respectful. Surrealism is surely ripe for the high jump now and I hope Robert Hughes engages it next week with the same relish he displayed in his demolition of modern architecture in last week's excellent **The Shock of the New** (BBC-2 repeat).

The Confessions of Felix Krull (C4) was as boring and soothing as any other piece of hastily-dubbed soft porn. 'It's really a terrible school of love you're making me go though', drawled someone in a tacky-sounding studio as Felix unveiled the bottom of last week's pick-up, a fetching tart who hones his form prior to the start of his real work as a hotel gigolo, which I shall be glancing at next week. The dominant image of the series is of two people knocking about in a downtown dubbing studio, but the visuals have an agreeable off-beam slushiness you don't get on British telly. A more straightforward chunk of smut came in the form of **The Harrod Experiment** (ITV), a genre film which traces its pedigree to those Harrison Marks nudies of the Sixties where a bunch of girls hit on the idea of visiting a nudist ski resort (you see them naked every 12½ minutes), except that this one was set in a post-sexual revolution establishment for Social (i.e. sexual) Experimentation (you see them naked every 12½ minutes). Viewers like myself who find this kind of thing more interesting than politics should keep a look out for little-known films full of unknowns, directed by unknowns, set in schools or hotels and shown at about 11.15 on Tuesdays to dismissive notices in the *TV Times* film column.

100 Years of Comedy (BBC-1) sounded like a contradiction in terms, like 'Two Seconds of Solitude'. However, it seems the laughs have been issuing from the Cambridge Footlights for a century now and apparently we are all very grateful. As Robert Hewison points out in his book on the subject, *Footlights!* (Methuen, £8.95), 'The concentration of intelligence in one of the country's leading universities guarantees that a fresh supply of potential talent is available every year.' It sounds like a badly-written variation on the white slave trade, but it certainly is true that the young have an edge in the comedy field, by virtue of their superior bounciness and attack. This telly-tribute took the form of an audition – a Sloane singing 'Just One Cornetto' was about par – inter-cut with evocations of past glories. Germaine Greer described, but didn't do, her Stripping Nun routine, then sang *Land of Hope and Glory* to a wriggling kitten. 'We were nearly subjected to rape by the man from Jonathan Cape', sang Frederic Raphael, remembering a Fifties revue he was in with Jonathan Miller. How that 'nearly' dates it! One thing everyone agreed on was that the creative genius behind the whole contemporary cult of the Footlights was Peter Cook. John Cleese remembered Trevor Nunn doing old Peter Cook sketches years after Cook had left Cambridge and Bill Oddie explained that *The Goodies* was an attempt to break away from this influence which explained why *The Goodies* cast such a gloom compared to the 'Not' lot for instance.

At Last . . . Mike Elliot (C4) received a lot of undeserved hype this week, with the word 'controversial' emerging as the favourite inexactitude. Can the company have been referring to the 'controversial' style of Alexei Sayle, whose personality and delivery Mike seems partial to? □

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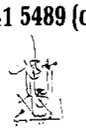

WORLD OF ISLAM FESTIVAL TRUST

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WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 2774 Set by F. R. Spofforth

Those generous sponsors of the arts, Penguin Books, have donated copies of their splendid *Penguin Dictionary of Proverbs* (published later this month) to ride on this one. A fitting moment, then, to revive one of the classic comps: grand-sounding but self-evident proverbs. (You may recall some of the winning entries from last time, such as 'He digs deepest who deepest digs' or 'Gloves make a poor present for the man with no hands'. We certainly recall them, so don't try any plagiarism.) Up to 10 shots each, by 24 June.

No 2771 Set by F. R. Spofforth

School reports on Terry Wogan or James Joyce, *or* accounts of Joyce's appearance on Wogan's chat show.

Report By Al Dente

Excellent. Special hon. menshes to Sidney Evans (who actually had his entry printed in letter-press) and W. F. Owtram (who wrote his entry on a genuine school-report form). Nine Newtons each to the worthy victors.

'And now a distinguished pupil of me old alma mater – Mr James Joyce, author of the famous Greek tragedy *Ulysses* and varicose other great works. Hello, Jim!'

'Dio mio! Non mi piace partecipare in questo spettacolo . . .'

'Whoa there, Jim! We know you've been away a long time, but go easy with the Swiss lingo. Now I'm sure we'd all like to hear what you remember about the dear old coll.'

'I remember every bloody word of every sermon about the eternal torments of Hell. And I remember my own soul festering in its secret sin.'

'Ah, better keep off the secret sin, Jimbo. Some of the kiddies may still be watching.'

'For God's sake, Wogan! You and Belvedere and Longford's family deserve each other, but leave me out of it. Where do I collect my fee?'

'I'll show you, Jimbo. Now don't go out and get blind on it . . . oops, sorry!'

PETER VEALE

Wogan, Terence

Terence is not too bright at his arithmetic. He is none too popular with the other boys, because he is forever playing the 'bright spark'. He failed the multiple choice test, in which the boys were asked to fill in the blanks with appropriate words. Appropriate his were not. If he reads then he keeps it to himself. He can translate a few phrases from a number of continental languages, but they are only the phrases one might find in the smallest talk. He is lamentable in all subjects, all sports, and only his table manners find any general favour. Nevertheless, we think he will do well in England, where we understand he intends to settle.

WILL BELLENGER

Joyce, James A.

English. Spelling still a problem. I would advise him to consult a dictionary rather than rely on inspired guesswork. Still adopts a childish habit of improvising words when formal phraseology fails him. Compositions promising, if a little morbid.

Classics. Allusive rather than scholarly. Some interesting speculations on the subject of Homeric topography.

Drama. His attempt to coerce a number of younger boys into enacting a piece by that immoral playwright Ibsen was, I am pleased to say, frustrated.

Scripture. Father O'Flaherty reports a distressing familiarity with the more doubtful parts of the Old Testament.

General Remarks. A retiring, somewhat pretentious boy. He must learn to realise that a man's reach necessarily extends his grasp. Prone to 'sneaking'. Excuses for unfinished work – usually something to do with broken spectacles – will no longer serve.

DAVID TAYLOR

TW: Welcome, Jim. How was your flight from Paris?

JJ: The scribe of Erin hemidemisemicircumnavigated the terrestrial orb with commendable celerity. While cribbed and confined in the cabin, the said scribbler munched meditatively on celery. He now looks forward to a sufficiently salty salary for this tomfooling shilly-shallery.

TW: (to audience): I think he's taking the mickey, but *I can't be sure. (Adopts a searching expression).* Does that mean you *did* have a good flight, Jim?

JJ: O yes, yes, I said yes.

TW: Now tell me, is it true that you live abroad for tax purposes, and like all us exiled superstars you're dying to get back to the ould sod (no madam, I don't mean Jimmy Young)?

JJ: Suffice. Shikespower! Pseudodanto! Anonymoses!

TW (to audience): In technical BBC parlance, we have a right one here. *(To JJ)* Do you fancy a spot on *Blankety Blank*, Jim?

PETER NORMAN

FIRST PERSON

Anne Smith

Ranting at the nation

LAST WEEK I was reminiscing with an editor in a pub. He had been reading that day's copy of the *Daily Mirror*, which contained a wonderfully bland piece about Liberace. 'O tempora! O slack-gutted mores!' he wept, as we recalled Cassandra's historic piece in the same paper on the same subject back in 1956. I was only 12 then, but it struck me straight off as the stuff to give the troops. My menopausal mother, you see, was quite entranced by the marcel-waved pudgy little creep, and we sisters had to sit grinding our teeth in near-Chekhovian despair and enforced silence every week while he oozed about his brother 'Jaarj' and massacred the popular classics on telly. Cassandra's libel was music to our ears after that.

No doubt the then Editor of the *Daily Mirror* knew that a libel action was inevitable, but he bravely went ahead and printed it, earning himself the undying gratitude of a few hundred thousand revolted people in the process. So where, we asked ourselves, are the fiery spirits now? Last night I had occasion to refer to a book that is steadily becoming my Bible, Jane Marcus's collection of Rebecca West's early journalism, *The Young Rebecca* (Macmillan/Virago £9.95). Abandoning my original task, I spent the whole evening re-reading it. Oh by jings there was a writer! She boldly went where no woman had gone before – or since, unfortunately. The missionary zeal of Deirdre Spart (whom Trotsky preserve) is a paper match to West's volcano. For not only did RW say outrageously true things, she said them with a fierce, stunning wit.

The *Times* apologia for their Hitler fiasco chuntered on about serious journalism being a risky business. My eye! For the *NS* yes, but I can't think of any other large-circulation daily or weekly which takes *risks*. On the contrary, they inevitably ride into battle astride carefully-constructed fences, and panic like stray virgins in pithead baths when any powerful crook threatens to sue. Who, for example, would have the nerve nowadays or indeed the command of the language, to write of Margaret Thatcher as West did of Asquith: 'No deputation that did not succeed in getting hold of Mr Asquith's head and banging it against a stone wall twice a second for two hours could make any real impression on him'? The nearest I can think of is Paul Johnson on his good days, or Auberton Waugh, who is not only so right-wing you can barely see him with binoculars, but too often goes over the top into a mad frenzy of social, physical and intellectual snobbery in a pitiful imitation of the Great Original, his father. For the rest, the devil has all the best tunes.

'Responsible' journalism, competing perhaps with television and its no-bias rule, has become mealy-mouthed. The Thunderer doesn't thunder any more: at its best it manages a tired fart, while commitment and illiteracy walk hand in hand down the gloomy path to 1984, grunting and moaning and spewing statistics with every step. Things have got so desperate that my whole day was lightened when I read about Attila the Stockbroker, a ranting London pub poet and pillar of the dole queue, in an article by Val Hennessy in *New Society*. Quotations like 'We Ranters go out there for a laugh and a fuck-about, as well as aiming to get across certain political ideas', 'Love may come and love may go but herpes lasts forever' and 'Royal babies make me puke' stimulated me to go and buy his album, *Ranting at the Nation* (Cherry Records, £3.99).

One of the best pieces in a very mixed bag is 'Russians in the DHSS', which goes:

> The scroungers and misfits have done it at last
> The die of destruction is finally cast
> The glue-sniffing Trotsky's final excess
> The Russians are running the DHSS.
>
> It must be the truth 'cause it's there in the news
> A prop by the Kremlin financed by the Jews
> And set up by Scargill has met with success
> The Russians are running the DHSS.

Not in the Great Tradition of English poetry, maybe, but definitely in the great tradition of Scottish flyting. □

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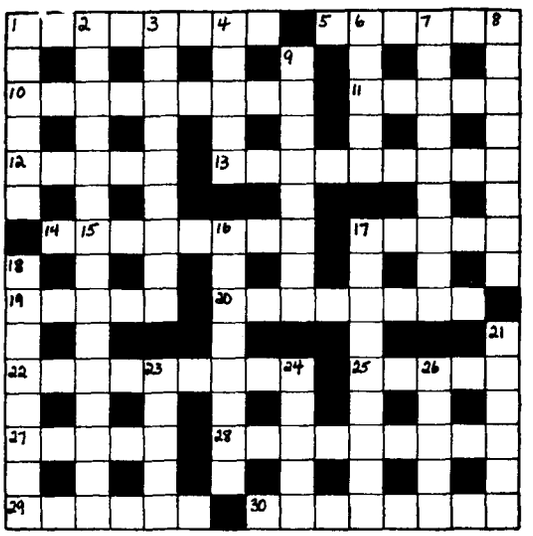
Weekend Crossword 1403

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1403, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 21 June.



Name_____

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ACROSS

1. Race in the grass and so no longer cold. (8)
5. Evidently two are able to dance. (6)
10. Without moving house an animal provides home for others. (9)
11. Blockhead who makes a noise among leftists. (5)
12. Make fresh survey and cut down about a thousand. (5)
13. In making it clear he is unconventional. (9)
14. Ugly old woman in make-up consuming coarse food. (8)
17. The mountains are without the married, but these are not single. (5)
19. Those who are hostile behead one at prayer. (5)
20. May be experienced with gratitude by the constant. (8)
22. Reorganise the body row. (9)
25. Atlas has it in brown. (5)
27. Sound which brings a man into church. (5)
28. Resort where an increasing number arrived without booking being started. (9)
29. Married after woman is produced for inspection. (6)
30. Gives publicity to a branch of medicine in the papers. (8)

DOWN

1. Notice rise of former champion. (6)
2. Make the plant refuse to pull a large number. (5)
3. In our pages a hill is translated. (9)
4. Time to be caught in rising confidence. (5)
6. Meeting where lucky thing loses a thousand. (5)
7. Great man in war but he gave service badly. (9)
8. See plane crash from the Himalayas. (8)
9. Listens to final counts and cheers. (8)
15. Banish vehicles going up into a part of France. (9)
16. Mark writing to show contrasting words. (8)
17. Not proper matches, but a bit of play is still included in the fees. (9)
18. Printers have only a moment in what has to be set up. (8)
21. Loss of head in crises is annoying. (6)
23. Magistrate appearing in three very unusual cases. (5)
24. If the mistake were pointless there would be nothing in school subjects. (5)
26. The road is up and an Athenian throws his weight about. (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1402

Prizewinners to 1402

Peter Carlen (London W1)
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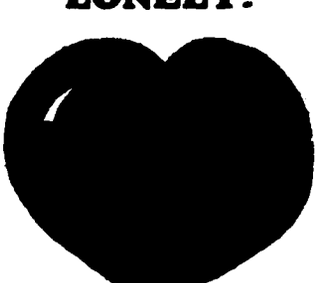

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The particular skills which candidates will be expected to possess include writing/issuing press releases, liaising with national, regional and local journalists, arranging press conferences and radio/TV interviews, monitoring press coverage and using news agencies. The successful candidate must also be a member of the National Union of Journalists. Experience in the health and social services field and/or trade unions would be an asset.

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LISTINGS

SAT 11 JUNE

BARROW-in-FURNESS March and rally against Trident. Spkr Joan Ruddock of CND. **Details: Kate Blanshard, 7 Tyne Road, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria. Barrow 38216/39699 (after 2pm) or Barrow 37989.**

LONDON 'Falkland Sound'/'Voces de Malvinas' at Theatre Upstairs, The Royal Court, Sloane Square, SW1. Words and thoughts of people whose lives have been affected by the Falklands War, based on research by the whole company. Mon-Sat 7.30pm. Mons. Seats £2, Tues-Thurs £3; Fri & Sat £4. **Bkings: 01-730 1745.**

LONDON 'Classroom approaches to African History'. Day conf for parents and teachers and anyone who wants to teach African history. Spkrs incl G. de la Mothe, Sylvia Collicott, Richard Rathbone. 10-5pm, Africa Centre, 38 King Street, WC2. Lunch/coffee. **Org. Assoc. of the Teaching of African History. Contact Cheryl Monteith, N. Lambeth Law Centre, 381 Kennington Lane, SE11.**

CROYDON 'Oily Cart Theatre Co.' in 'Beam me up Spotty'. Children's Theatre for over 7's. 11am Croydon Warehouse Theatre. Adults £1.30. Children 70p. Temp. memb. 10p. 62 Dingwall Road. **Details: 01-680 4060.**

SUN 12 JUNE

LONDON 'The Architecture of Community'. 11am Library, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, WC1. Spkr Julienne Hanson. **Org. South Place Ethical Society.**

MON 13 JUNE

LONDON 'Disestablishment of Church of England'. 7.30pm Library, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. Spkrs Rev. Canon Colin Buchanan and Brian Sedgemore. **Org. Nat. Secular Soc. Ltd. Details: Terry Mullin 01-272 1266.**

TUES 14 JUNE

LONDON 'Higher Education and the Community'. Talk by William Stubbs, Education Officer, ILEA. 5pm. Rm 227, Dept. of Environmental Design, Poly of N. London, Holloway Road, N7. Adm. free. **Details: Local Project Unit 01-607 2789 x 2451.**

BATTERSEA 'Defended to Death?' – issues in Nuclear Armament and Disarmament. Course org. Battersea CND. Tonight: 'Defence without Offence: Non-nuclear defence strategy.' 7.30-9.30pm Junction Resource Centre, 248 Lavender Hill, SW11. **Details: Harry Zutshi 01-675 1913.**

WED 15 JUNE

LONDON 'The question of Value' – the study of popular culture. Spkrs Terry Eagleton, Peter Fuller. 7.30pm Seminar Rm, ICA, the Mall, SW1. **Tickets bookable in advance. Adm. £1.40 plus 50p day pass. 01-930 3647.**

LONDON 'Conflict Resolution as Problem Solving' Spkr Anthony de Reuck, Lecturer in Linguistic and International Studies at Surrey University. Third in a series of summer talks on Wed. eves. 6.30pm St. James's Church, 197 Piccadilly, W1. **Org. DUNAMIS. Details: Nigel Pearce 01-437 6851.**

LONDON 'The psychology of conservatism, past and present'. Spkr Raphael Samuel, 7.30pm Freemasons Arms, 81 Long Acre, WC2. **Org. Socialist Society 01-734 8501.**

THURS 16 JUNE

HENDON 'Disarmament – the European Dimension'. Public meeting on the Eastern European peace movement. Spkrs Gerard Holden (END) and Andrew White (END and Bradford School of Peace Studies) 8pm Hendon Library, The Burroughs, NW4. **Org Golders Green and Hendon CND. Details: 01-458 4369.**

LONDON Carol Rumens will be reading from 'Star Whisper' in Arts Council Shop at 1pm. Adm. free, 8 Long Acre, Covent Garden, WC2. **Org. Poetry Book Society.**

FRI 17 JUNE

LONDON Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, SW1. New York Shakespeare Festival in Joseph Papp's production of 'Buried Inside Extra' by Thomas Babe. Previews at 8pm. Mon. eves. all seats at £2. **Bking: 01-730 1745.**

LONDON Troops Out Movement SuperCombo (African high-life music from Sierra Leone) at Chat's Palace, 42/44 Brooksby's Walk, Homerton, E9. Bar/bookstall/displays. Adm. £2.50/£1.50 unwaged. **Benefit in aid of East London branch of T.O.M.**

GLASTONBURY CND Peace Festival begins. Wkend tickets £14 (£12 in advance) from **Glastonbury CND Festival', 11 Goodwin St, N4 3HQ. Cheques: 'Glastonbury CND Festival'.**

BRIXTON 'bout uman rites' – renowned Jamaican poet and literary critic Mervyn Morris rereading Oku Onuora. 8pm in Basement, 165 Railton Road, SE24. **Org Creation for Liberation. Details: 01-737 2268.**

BIRMINGHAM CND Rally 7.30pm Digbeth Civic Hall. Spkr Joan Ruddock.

FORTHCOMING

18 JUNE Coventry CND Disco. 8.30pm. Colin Campbell, Jordan Well. Tickets from 'Wedge' £1, or contact Chris Comber Coventry 667453.

18 JUNE Greenwich branch of the Communist Party of Gt Britain Marx Centenary Celebration 1-5pm Kidbrooke House, Mycenae Road, SE3. Debate: Marxism in the '80s. Entertainment, Exhibition, films, stalls, food. Adm. £1.50/Free to unwaged and under fives. **Details: Frances Hook eves 01-853 2587 or Ben Matley days 01-858 0338.**

21 JUNE Oxford 'The New Right, Sexual Morality & Family Policy'. Seminar/Workshop. 10-5pm. Spkrs Miriam David, Prof A. H. Halsey, Kay Carmichael. Elvin Room, Ruskin College, Walton Street. **Details and registration Desmond Bell 0865 54331.**

25 JUNE Banbury First George Orwell Memorial Lecture. 7.30pm Banbury Town Hall. Spkr Prof Bernard Crick. **Details: Joyce Aydon Banbury 720124. Org. Banbury Labour Party.**

25 JUNE London 'Plastic bullets': a working conference to launch and plan campaign activities. Spkrs incl Arthur Latham, Richard Balfe, Steve Bundred. Creche. 1-5pm County Hall, SE1. **Org Labour Committee on Ireland. Details and registration: Box 42, 136 Kingsland High Road, E8.**

25 JUNE Manchester Co-operatives Trades Fair at Piccadilly Plaza Exhibition Hall 10-5pm. **Org. Greater Manchester Co-operative Development Agency 061-832 4300.**

25/26 JUNE London National Radical Nurses Conf. 'Causes of Ill Health'. 10-5 at 'Inter-Action', 15 Wilkin St, NW5. £1 per day incls. some food. Accom., creche, wheelchair access. **Details Karen 01-671 1233, Michelle 01-607 1044, Pat 01-481 9319.**

25/26 JUNE London Assertiveness Training – mixed group. Wkend Introductory Session. Closing date for applications: 15 June. **Details Dorann Van Heeswyck 01-622 6493.**

26 JUNE RAF Cottesmore, nr Oakham, Leics. Picnic at training base for Tornado – Britain's new nuclear bomber. 2-5pm. **Details: Leicester CND 0533-57228.**

25 JUNE London Marx with Sparx – mammoth festival at Alexandra Palace. **Org. Communist Party. Details and tickets: Nine Temple 01-251 4406.**

4-8 JULY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S BLOCKADE AT GREENHAM COMMON AIRBASE 'Arms are for Linking – together we can stop Cruise'. **Details: July 4th Action, Greenham Office, 5 Leonard Street, London, EC2.**

Sorry, but we can't accept entries over the phone. Entries must be received by Friday preceding issue date. We reserve the right to exclude items without giving reasons and are not responsible for errors. Space is strictly limited so if you definitely want your item to appear, we suggest you book it as an ad. under the appropriate classified heading. See main heading for rates, etc.

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